SUBVERSION IN EAST PAKISTAN



A.M.K. MASWANI

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By

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FOREWORD

The emergence of Bangladesh has often been described, as "secession," or "independence." But the inconsrovertible fact, however, is that it was the result of a blatant and naked aggression. Without this external invasion there could not have been no Bangladesh.

The reason why a false impression has been tried to be created through a massive propaganda carried on by the enemies of Pakistan is obvious. It was not for the love of the people of the erstwhile East Bengal, nor to ameliorate the miserable (?) life they were said to have been living under a united Pakistan, that the adventure was undertaken. It was done only to prove to the world that the "two nation theory", on which Pakistan was based, was quite untenable. It would be seen, therefore, that both during the Indo-Pak War of 1971 and in about two years afterwards, more than two hundred books were published in India alone, in a colossal bid to distort history and justify India's "intervention" in support of what was described as the cause of the people of Bengal.

As agains this, not many work have been produced in Pakistan to counter the nefarious vilifications against this country and to place facts before the public as they are. It is, however, another matter if the Indian designs have boomeranged and proved—much to the chargin of the sworn enemies of Pakistan—that the countrys basis of foundation is sound, even if it has

been cut into two. The very fact that "Bangladesh" has not merged in the Indian Part of Bengal to lend credence to "Bengal to lend credence to "Bengali Nationalism" thought to be a *raison d'etre* for the new "country" in the east, is proof positive that a separate Muslim nationhood persists.

The book, "Subversion in East Pakistan," is a welcome effort to put the record straight, so far as historical facts are concerned. Many salient features have been brought out in this work, including the pre-independence background of that part of the sub-continent which is now called Bangladesh.

Although I may not be wholly in agreement with what has been stated in the book as a whole, yet I I would call it a very good treatise on the subject. I am sure no one is more qualified than the author, Mr. A.M.K. maswani, in describing the facts as they did happen, since he has been through it all himself as a working journalist, watching the events unfolding right before his eyes and looking them in their proper perspective.

I met Mr. Maswani for the first time in 1946, when he was Editor-in-Charge of the Orient Press of India's Calcutta Bureau. I had then just been elected General Secretary of the Assam Provincial Muslim League. The Orient Press was a news agency established on the orders of the Quaid-e-Azam, since Muslim journalists were rarely given an opportunity by the Hindu newspapers and news agencies of India, to take to the profession and were categorically pre-judiced against Muslim League news. Most of it,

relating to the struggle for Pakistan was being disseminated through the O.P.I. and one can appreciate the importance of the organisation. I was connected with the Orient Press as one of its Directors. Mr. Maswani was, therefore, doing a most important job vis-a-vis the Pakistan movement. There was, however, no Bureau of the O.P.I. in Assam and the Calcutta office also covered that province. It was in that context that he came to Shillong, Assam's provincial headquarter. At the time he was also the Secretary General of the Bengal Muslim Journalists Association, an infant body.

Mr. Aijaz Muhammad Khan Maswani hailed from Saharanpur in U.P. and had been educated at the Aligarh Muslim University. His father had been one of the alumni of Sir Syed's M.A.O. College and had, on the directions of the Grand Old Man, started efforts for the spread education amongst the Muslims of Saharanpur who, under the influence of the orthodox Ulama of the *Dar ul-Uloom* of Deoband and the *Mazahir ul-Uloom* of Saharanpur, given a rigorous go-by to modern education. Through his efforts various primary schools were set up and an Islamia High School which later on was converted into a College and still exists. In 1932 he was also elected a Member of the All India Muslim League Council. In 1937, however, Mr. Maswani's father and three brothers became the victims of a ghastly tragedy—all four of them succumbing on the same day on partaking of poisoned *halwa* recieved by registered post, in a dastardly cold-blooded homicide which remains untraced to this day.

Muslims of northen India knew very little about their brethren in East Bengal and Assam, and Mr. Maswani came to Calcutta totally uninhibited by preconceived notions and straight away plunged into the thick of it. He was, however, given a good grounding in the politics and culture of the region by such stalwart as Maulana Muhammad Akram Khan, Mr. Habibullah Bahar, Ghazi Abdur Rahman Siddiqui, Dr. A.M. Malik, Allama Raghib Ahsan, Mr. Abdul Matin Choudhry, myself and the then student leaders like Fazlul Qadir Choudhry, Anwar Hussain, Shah Azizur Rahman, Nuruddin, and many others of his own profession. He soon became friendly with such young Bengali poets and litterateurs as Jasimuddin, Talim Hussain, Farrukh Ahmad, Sirdar Zainuddin, Benazir Ahmad, Abdul Ghani Hazari Khundkar Mohammad Ilyas to name only a few.

After independence, he moved to Dacca and joined the Morning News, of which he became the star reporter and then Assistant Editor. Later he had his own paper, the daily Chronicle from Chittagong, which had to be abandoned on the day Indian forces took over that city and he was sent to jail.

During his journalistic career in East Pakistan, we met occasionally and exchanged views on matters of politics and culture. In May, 1971, two months after the militaıy action, I visited Chittagong and Mr. Maswani took me round the areas where the "Biharis" had been subjected to the most gruesome massacres by the Indian ' infiltrators" and their Muslim collaborators. He seemed to enjoy undisputed confidence of his people. After that we met only after his repat-

riation from the Bangladesh prison, to Karachi, and he was suffering from the after-effects of the tensions of three years of horror and incarceration.

I am very happy that he has written this book. It has, evidently, been delayed. This was because the author had to difficulties of rehabilitate which, to the best of my knowlege, he has not been able to achieve as yet. I only wish he was in a position to write on subjects which are closest to our hearts, which can only be done in an atmosphere of absolute mental peace.

MAHMUD ALI

Islamabad,
14 September, 1978

PREFACE

Immediately after the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971, India came out with a large number of books which tried to record the history of the so-called seccession of Muslim Bengal from Pakistan. Pakistan, on the other hand, produced none. All the works which were written and published in this country or by Pakistani authors outside the country, referred to events concerning the end period, or as analytical of the so-called military defeat .None, however, traced the history of the factors and influences leading to a successful Indian invasion of East Pakistan, which made it possible for the former to achieve the objective she so devoutly wished for.

Prior to 1971, during the disturbed period and afterwards, there was a barrage of propaganda round the globe which condemned Pakistan for the events and sought to justify the actions leading to the Indian aggression. The voice of this country, however, was too feeble to be properly appreciated even by our own citizens who have developed a nauseating weakness for things foreign, including political opinions. Nothing was done by the Government or the people of Pakistan to wash off the tar of interested and false propaganda against the nation.

When I came back to Pakistan after passing two years in a Bengladesh jail, I was filled with an inner urge to do something in this regard, as I had had the occasion of watching the events as they developed

right from the beginning. My views were not influenced with the regional emotionalism that has generally distorted values. But, I was not only surprised but shocked to learn that no one seemed to be interested in the truth. Somewhere down the line—I don't know when—truth seems to have become a casualty in the political life of Pakistan. The intelligentsia of this country—at least the vocal one—had become affected by the virus of materialistic politicking. It did not believe in facts unless they were sugar-coated to sweeten some palates. The true history of what happened in the former East Pakistan still cries to be retold and recorded.

I have been a journalist since many years before the independence of the sub-continent, and many of the leading lights of my professional fraternity now active in Pakistan had heard about me one time or the other. I met some. I corresponded with others. None of them was interested, either in me as a journalist who had been the victim of a terrible revolution which had reversed fortunes, nor in the story which I could tell about events which had passed in the shape of a montage before my very eyes. The Chairman of the Press Trust gave me a short interview in 1974 which was the coolest in my memory.

Most of these gentlemen had formed opinions, without having the least idea of how things had actually worked out, of the people involved, and they were unwilling to hear anything different. They seemed to be afraid that truth may somehow harm them.

Only the Institute of Strategic Studies gave me the chance of writing some papers on isolated incidents

which, however, could not see the light of publication. The Pakistan Historical Commission refused to even acknowledge a reference made to them by the Institute to utilise my experiences on the subject. It was suggested to them that it was necessary to put the record straight so far as Pakistan's role in the history of the period was concerned, otherwise when histories are compiled by future generations, the documents available to them would be only one-sided—the Indian version—and that would not be the correct one. Still, I got the cold shoulder from them.

I may make it clear that, having arrived here from a jail, with all my possessions looted and destroyed immediately after the fall in Bangladesh, I had to make efforts for survival and, naturally, could hardly apply myself to the task absolutely on my own and in my own time. The delay which has occured, was, therefore, natural. I am grateful to the Publishers of this book to have at last given me the chance to set forth my study before the readers.

Included in the book is a Chapter on Biharis. The word "Bihari" has been defined in it. In its wider though temporary connotation, I am a "Bihari." But in fact I did not even see the province of Bihar except though the windows of a Railway train, hailling, as I do, from the westernmost district of U. P., that is, Saharanpur, where Maulvis are mass-produced. The political treatment of the Biharis in East Pakistan was much the same as that of the migrants in West Pakistan, with some serious differences. While in East Pakistan there was no point of concentration, in the other wing the migrants had a

dominant place in Karachi. This resulted in different evolutionary tendences. Continued resistance to evil influences, hardened the Biharis in their loyalty to Pakistan and the ethical values of collective intercourse. The Karachites, however, adopted different values mostly influenced by the commercial approach of the people there. Individualism of a growingly extreme nature took the place of collectivism, and it affected their political outlook as well. This was brought home with a shock to the Urdu-speaking repatriates from Bangladesh on their arrival. They only formed the body of fresh consumers in a market, rather than the broken remnants of a section of humanity who had just passed a three year traumatic experience, pressed down as they were by the conquering hordes of India and an alienated population trying to exhibit its goodwill to their mentors the easy way: by torturing the "collaborators" with Pakistan's ideology, like two millstones. These were the differences. The common experience has been of a political neglect, an exclusion from the representative counsels of the country, which has led to bitterness against their lot on the one hand and on the other against the State itself.

So far as the Government is concerned, their attitude has been rather puzzling. During negotiations with India and Mujib's Bengladesh, a hue and cry was raised by Pakistan about her difficulties in absorbing the "Bihari" population. At the time it was believed to be only a gimmick for bargaining. Hundreds of thousands of men, women and children, passing through a life of terror and dishonour, waited

for the time when the need for haggling would no longer be there and they would be allowed to come to *Pakistan*, which was their home and not East Pakistan or West Pakistan. Imagine their dismay when only a small proportion from amongst them was accepted as Pakistanis or admitted on *humanitarian* grounds, which was merely tantamount to their entry into a Pakistan which had changed its values from a collective attitude where a sympathetic cooperation by others is one of the cardinal principles, to individualistic, in which no such sentiments exist. On Government level, no effort was made to assist in their rehabilitation. For nearly 40,000 families who had to start afresh from scratch, all told only a thousand houses were built from foreign contributions.

It is no wonder that these people ask themselves: Is this the reward for loyalty to the nation—to be completely ignored? Is there no share for these Pakistanis in the attentions of a civilised Government which is responsible for all the citizens in their hour of need? Why have these people been left out, when, every time that there is a flood or an earthquake or any other heavenly visitation the Government runs to the aid of the affected?

Unfortunately, it is not simply the fault of the Government. There are many intellectuals who think that the "Biharis" do not deserve as much attention as the Palestinians, East African Muslims, Vietnamese or others. The only sympathetic person who had opportunity to know few facts of history is the *poor* Pakistani, who did whatever he could.

The Biharis left millions worth of immovable property in the former East Pakistan. So did the

Bangladeshis in Pakistan. This property has since been taken away by unknown people. The Bihari loser's case has not been brought into discussions with the new Bangladesh Government. There are no signs of the same even now. As for those who had their movable property in former East Pakistan, savings of a lifetime or small industries or business, they have no claim anywhere. It is a situation which smacks of injustice, a heartless callousness about a matter which calls forth for certain positive considerations.

It was for these reasons that this author could not write this book earlier. He had to work for a living against odds, starting life from nothing. It may be that his old knack of putting facts across has not been successfully used by him. But they at least have been marshalled, and it is hoped readers would appreciate that.

Rawalpindi. A.M.K. MASWANI
January 1, 1978.

CHAPTER 1

High Treason

"I shall kill you without food . . . I shall kill you without water," ranted Shaikh Mujibur Rahman on March 7, 1971 on the Dacca Race Course Maidan.

If ever there could be a declaration of war, this indubitably was. Whom was the Shaikh threatening in such clear terms, but the Armed Forces of Pakistan which were there to enforce the will of the Central Government ? Even as a leader of the majority party, whether holding the reins of Government or not, he had no right to make such threats. The Armed Forces were a national entity and no one had the right to destroy them.

As a result of the elections of 1970, Mujib's party, the Awami League had won a majority, with a possible 167 seats in a House of 313—all of them from East Pakistan, one of the five provinces in the country. The National Assembly was to act as a constitution-making body before converting itself into the national parliament, as the country till then had no Constitution, the old one having been scrapped

through an expression of the political will *of the leaders.* Without a constitution, the power still to be transferred to the parliament, Mujib had no legal *locus standi.* Even if he had, he had no right to threaten the Armed Forces with destruction.

It has been said that there was a conspiracy to deprive the Awami League—or East Pakistan—from reaping the fruits of franchise. That is what Mujib himself wanted the world to believe. The facts are, however, otherwise. The apparent success of the Awami League at the polls did not truly represent the will of the people of East Pakistan. It was one of the evil tricks of the western system of elections in a parliamentary democracy. East Pakistan had been infiltrated over several years by *agents provocateur* from the neighbouring land of India, including thousands of trained commandos, who had been extensively used to threaten and browbeat the electors and results obtained at the polls were thoroughly misleading. The Awami League had won with only 42 per cent of the total votes, out of which nearly 12 per cent were bogus cast mostly by infiltrators and 24.3 per cent by the Hindus. Most of the rest (about 6 per cent) were for "autonomy" and not secession.

Pakistan had been established on the basis of "self-determination" by the Muslims of the sub-continent. Only about 7 per cent of the Muslim votes in East Pakistan had catapulted the secessionist Awami League into a majority !

The question can justifiably be asked as to how it happened that Mujib was able to carry a majority

of the East Pakistanis with him in his setting up a veritable parallel Government in March 1971. The point is that he did not carry a majority with him. There is a great similarity between what happened in East Pakistan and the manner in which Hitler assumed power at Munich in 1933, with the difference that a good many of parallels to the German SS Guards and Hitler Youth were not even East Pakistani, but infiltrators from India masquerading as East Pakistanis. The "Mukti Bahini" and the East Pakistan Students' Federation, had been romping about at will terrorizing all over the countryside since early 1970 and browbeating one and all into submission. It is easy for a lot of people to theorize on what happened in East Pakistan while sitting in the comfortable security of distant homes. It is those who have gone through the whole nightmare of the times to *know* actually what happened.

It is not difficult to locate isolated instances of happenings in West Pakistan comparable to what transpired in the East. There have been times at specified places where the very expression of certain political views has brought out mobs to attack people, made up of *agents provocateur* and adventure-seeking youngsters, who join for the fun of it. That was the type of situation which had been allowed to develop in East Pakistan.

When a people is seized with what may be termed as "mob psychology", there is hardly anything more than emotion which sways its will. There is very little logic or intelligent political analysis to guide its actions. This very psychology, when developed

scientifically and disciplined in a regular army, produces heroes and national figures. But, among the mass of people, there is no scientific orderliness or discipline and it is most often suicidal in nature.

For twenty-four years, India had waged a relentless psychological war against East Pakistan, with a view to generate a psychology of hatred which could be switched over to mob action, and eventually it had succeeded in that by 1971. On the other hand, there were errors and omissions on the part of the leaders and the Government which helped and assisted this growth and eventually raised a Frankenstein in the shape of Shaikh Mujib.

West Pakistan had its own problems which led to the break-up of One Unit. Probably four provinces in West Pakistan were setup with the aim of balancing against the grant of the principle of one-man-one-vote to placate East Pakistan which would have given it a majority over the other wing on the basis of population. This balance could only be in a bi-cameral parliament for the Federation. But this provided a handle to Shaikh Mujib to acquire the dissolution of the whole of Pakistan through his insistence on making a Constitution on the basis of his Six Points. Briefly stated, the Six Points adumbrated by the Awami League were :

1. Pakistan should be a Federal State "based on the Lahore Resolution of 1940."
2. The Federal Government should deal only with Defence and Foreign Affairs.
3. There should be separate monetary and fiscal policies for the provinces.

4. The Federal Government should have no tax-levying authority and the expenses for running it should be from voluntary contributions by the Provinces.
5. Each of the federating units should have either its own currency or separate external trade accounts and have their own Trade Commissioners abroad.
6. Each of the Provinces should have constitutional authority to maintain para-military or territorial forces.

The Six Points, in fact, envisaged the complete abolition of the Central or Federal Government. For, even a cursory analysis of the above would show that it would be at the mercy of the Provinces as without any financial powers of its own, it would be impossible to maintain the Armed Forces up to the required strength and to run even foreign affairs properly which primarily follows the requirements of foreign trade and defence.

As if to further confirm his intentions, Shaikh Mujib made it clear in January 1971 that each province would contribute towards the maintenance of the Armed Forces sums in proportion to the number of personnel from that province, in one of his speeches. Of course he spoke for East Pakistan only when he stated this, but that was the biggest province of the country and its strategic requirements of defence—which, according to him, were not to be taken into account—were governed by many other substantial considerations.

As long as there was One Unit in West Pakistan, a Constitution on the basis of Six Points would have spelt the dissolution of the Centre for the two wings, forging independent entities of either. But, with the break up of One Unit before the elections, that would have meant the dismemberment of West Pakistan as well. Mujib, after obtaining an absolute majority in the Constituent Assembly which would have been born on the results of the 1970 elections, made it quite clear that he was quite unwilling to compromise on the Six Points on which he was going to base the new Constitution for the country—with 167 seats in a House of 313 in his pocket. The Legal Framework Order was silent on whether the Constitution was to be passed by a bare majority or two-thirds, which had its own implications. Even if it was to be passed by a two-thirds majority, there were enough supporters of the break-up idea in the West to provide him with another 43 votes. The following was the party disposition in the 1970 elections for West Pakistan :—

Pakistan People's Party....	81
Independents	15
Pakistan Muslim League (Qayyum)	9
PML (Council)	7
Jamiat ul-Ulama (Mufti)	7
Jamiat ul-Ulama (Hazarvi)	7
NAP (Wali)	6
Jamaat-e-Islami	4
PML (Convention)	2

The People's Party could have bagged another 6 (Women's) seats, bringing their total to 87. Many of the parties who had gained seats in West Pakistan were

known to have opposed the establishment of Pakistan and they could have thrown in their lot with the Awami League, when it came to the decisive stakes. But this is an idle exercise in figures. The fact is that Mujib was determined to rush through an already prepared Constitution based on Six Points and have it passed on the basis of bare majority.

A Federation is *ab initio* a voluntary arrangement. This had been determined in 1947. The question was now one of autonomy. But, autonomy could not be allowed to go so far as to kill the Federation, which the Six Points envisaged. The onus of speaking on behalf of West Pakistan lay with the Pakistan People's Party which believed that if the session of the National (or Constituent Assembly) was held, Mujib would railroad it to pass a Constitution which went against the spirit of the division of the sub-continent. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Chairman of the PPP, therefore opposed firmly the calling of the session, unless an agreement on the shape of the Constitution was arrived at earlier. By doing so, he saved the integrity of West Pakistan at least. During negotiations when Mujib refused to budge from his stand, he went so far as to call for arrangements between West and East Pakistan, since Mujib's Awami League was restricted wholly to his province and the People's Party to the West. If this had been agreed to at the time, a lot of bloodshed and war could have been avoided. But, it is apparent that Mujib had placed his stakes high. It is now known that he, in pursuing this policy, had been acting as the catspaw of outside interests, determined since 1947 to undo Pakistan.

The Awami League had been established in East Pakistan by Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy in 1950. It had passed through several ups and downs and adopted various names, and got altered from an all-Pakistan political organisation to a merely provincial one, though the stature of Suhrawardy as an all-Pakistan leader gave it a national status. After the Communist Party was banned in Pakistan, the fellow-travellers and sympathisers of that slipped into the Awami League quietly. The full story of the way it happened will be unfolded later on in this book. Suffice it to say here that the Awami League assumed its role as a party devoted wholly to the subversion of Pakistan after the death of Suhrawardy, and the assumption of its leadership by Shaikh Mujibur Rahman.

The Awami League had from the very beginning assumed the position of a champion of East Pakistan against the so-called exploitation by West Pakistan. This had become the major prop for its existence. There was, however, no such exploitation. The slow development of the province was a natural product of history and was germane to the situation obtaining in East Pakistan on its independence. You can hardly expect a baby to start running before it has learnt to walk or stand on its feet. The area which had formed East Pakistan was actually a hinterland of Calcutta, utilised for two hundred years to provide the raw materials of the gigantic industrial machine developed in West Bengal. Muslims were kept in abject poverty and misery by the dominant steam-roller of Hindu zemindary ever

since the British Government assumed Bengal's *diwani* in 1763 from the Mughal Emperor at Delhi. The full story of this, however, will be told later. The Awami League, for its very existence, assumed a character which made it the happy hunting ground for Indian and foreign *agents provocateur*.

In 1951 the writer of this work, in an interview with Suhrawardy, pointed out to him that the declared objectives of his Awami League and the ruling Muslim League hardly differed from each other and since political parties drew their life-blood from their alternative programmes, was not his party a bit redundant? Suhrawardy stated that it was true, but there was also the matter of implementing a programme and he and his party did not believe that the ruling Muslim League was doing justice to its objectives and should be replaced. I did not fully appreciate this explanation, but it showed to me that there was little in the hands of the Awami League leader to go to the people excepting his own personality and the grouse of his followers. It was natural therefore for the Awami League to become an unconscious instrument of an unseen hand, a forum of agitation for emotional hare-chasing.

Maulana Abdul Hameed Khan Bhashani became the head of the East Pakistan Awami League—lately let loose after his indoctrination at the hands of communist training cells inside the jail. Within the party there was a constant clash of the personalities of Suhrawardy and Bhashani, but each tolerated the other as Suhrawardy provided the Awami League the

stature of an all-Pakistan dimension and the League provided Suhrawardy with a party of his own. Mujib was merely its Joint Secretary, utilised every now and then to run the errands of the Leader or make disruptive noises in the meetings of other organisations.

When, however, the Awami League reached its maturity it lost its single leader of all-Pakistan prominence, Suhrawardy. By this time Mujib and the League had developed tendencies which may have appealed to a section of the youth of East Pakistan but not to the maturer politicians. This is apparent from the obvious position that no elder leader had been a part of the Awami League when it swept the polls in 1970. It consisted of people who had only lately appeared on the horizon of the province as "leaders", much less being very well-known in West Pakistan.

By and large, the followers of the Awami League also consisted of the youth who had been born much after the establishment of Pakistan and a few of them were just toddlers when the British left. They knew very little of their history, the aggrandisement and tyranny of the Hindu zamindars and the reasons for which Pakistan had become a political necessity for the Muslims. On the other hand, they were fed a great deal of propaganda which made them believe just the reverse of what was the true fact. This book forms a record of what actually happened in this direction. The Awami League leaders themselves in later days resorted to grand falsehoods and lies to mislead the common people, especially the youth, and made them very touchy. It was, for example, very difficult for any one to point out the falsehoods and

say that these were being propagated with an ulterior motive. Forthwith a serious reaction could be visible and the head of such a person would be demanded on a charger. Nobody could easily lay the finger on anti-state activities of the leaders involved and get away with it, as the whole province would be led to believe that this was being done with the motive of suppressing opposition. As a result of this, the real traitors who were later proved to be so, got away with all that they did, until it was too late and treason was exposed only when the wheels of aggression had successfully moved across the land, to be dealt with much later in a horrible way, by the people themselves.

It may be mentioned here in passing that similar efforts are being made in the residual Pakistan and treason is being clothed in the habiliments of politics, doubts being successfully clouded through the logic of stating that every Government in power has usually dubbed the opposition as traitorous for the sake of keeping in power. There are certain obvious elements who have been straining to gain their entry inside the citadels of power for similar reasons as they did in East Pakistan. It is only hoped that the instinctive logic of the people would not allow this to happen ever.

The biggest point utilised by the secessionists to further their interests was the so-called problem of exploitation of the East by the West. Looking deeply into the facts of history, this was an absurd proposition. Firstly the imbalance in development of the eastern wing as compared to the western was due to other indelible factors of history. The region which formed East Pakistan had been kept in such a state of under-

development, not only in the economic sector but also in the matter of social advancement, that it was bound to take much longer to get up on its feet. During this time the West marched forward at a more rapid rate. The only factor to be considered was the building of the infra-structure at a much faster speed so that East Pakistan could be in a position to reach that position of maturity rapidly. This was, in fact, done. In a matter of just about fifteen years, East Pakistan had gone far ahead to take up its own development seriously. Secondly, if there was some amount of exploitation, it was not on the basis of one wing against the other, but a section of the people of both the wings against the common masses. It was only incidental that these exploiting sections had set up shop from the very beginning in a part of West Pakistan, and in a particular city.

Political wisdom would have called for a realistic analysis of the forces of reaction and a common front against them. This did not happen, and it provided the handle to outside forces, especially Indian, to make capital out of. This, again, was due to the fact that East Pakistani leadership came up from the lower middle class which was completely ignorant of the economic and other forces operating in the country and did not possess the guts to stand on their own in joint counsels. By the time this political maturity was achieved, a lot of false hares were loose amongst them and they could not see the wood for the trees.

To know all these factors in their proper perspective, it is necessary to appreciate the correct situation as

it stood in 1947, the zero point from which Pakistan began to pull forward in the direction of progress. The position is so deeply imbedded in history that a brief factual study of the same cannot be ruled out in a proper understanding of the whole process. Thus, when we begin a study of Indian subversion in East Pakistan, we first go into the history of the region until we come to the position in 1947.

Development was always depicted in a comparative picture of the two wings and not as progress from the base to the latest situation. Since this is not a work for recording the correct picture of the economic development of East Pakistan, we cannot go into the process of digging out the facts and figures. But, a broad analysis can be made in a rough study.

At the time of the division of India, East Pakistan was purely a hinterland of Calcutta, providing the great metropolis its raw materials of industry. It had no capacity for capital formation, very little education, no managerial skills or technical capacities and the Muslims were even reluctant to fulfil needs of unskilled and manual labour. The sea and river jetties were manned by Hindu Oriya labour, and a railway project connecting Darsana with Jessore in 1947 had to wait two years because manual labour was not available. Tea garden labour was, as a rule, wholly from Hindus from as far-flung areas as Madras and the Santhal Parganas. There were no jute mills, only eight cotton and four sugar mills owned and run by the Hindus.

As against this desolate situation, there were 74 jute mills in 1971, 4 paper mills, two paper-board mills, more than 20 sugar mills, as many cotton mills,

a gigantic Steel Mills, a Petroleum Refinery, two Rayon Mills, nearly 30 match factories, a number of oil and vegetable ghee mills, many fertilizer factories, leather tanning factories and so on. Tea production had gone tremendously up and supplied all its requirements to West Pakistan at a higher rate than justified by international markets. In fact East Pakistan supplied more to West than it received from it by about three times. Instead of East Pakistan being a captive market, it was actually the other way round. By the time the Awami League won the elections, the province had become self-sufficient in sugar, fertilizers, tea, and some other items and was exporting tea, jute goods, jute, tanned leather, paper, newsprint and so on, mainly to West Pakistan.

In order to speed up development, capital had to be utilised from West Pakistan in the same way as some countries including Pakistan invite foreign investments. But during the sixties more and more of indigenous enterprise was being encouraged, often with liberal assistance from the financing institutions of the country. This was because private capital was still shy and lacked know-how. The development activities in the public as well as private sectors and the influx of commercial and non-commercial refugees from India had from the very beginning sent the real estate prices sky-rocketing and "the biggest building spree East of Suez" had made small land-owners into multi-millionaires just by sitting on their haunches and doing nothing. To this can be added a large number of other schemes which provided the East Pakistanis with

easy money, such as import licensing facilities and so on.

The Awami League charge that East Pakistan had been exploited had actually no weight in fact. But it was one of the biggest sheet-anchors of the party, and a lot of people were paying heed to it and demanding more without considering whether they deserved or not in terms of their productive capacities. Facts had been shoved down to the bottom and a hysterical emotionalism had taken their place, fanned to red heat by interested politicians, sit-at-home businessmen who collected the cream without having to work for it and last but not least, the *agents provocateurs* from India. We would be reading in subsequent chapters the sordid tale of this subversion.

The Awami League leaders and their henchmen did not stop at starting hares which had no political ground of their own, but resorted to outright falsehoods. It was stated, for example, that West Pakistan was the importer of large quantities of rice which was sold at a lower price to the consumers than extant at home. To many it came as a great surprise after the fall of that wing that Pakistan had made a good deal of the lag in its foreign-exchange earnings with the export of rice and getting paid for it in dollars, which formerly went to East Pakistan!

Politically-speaking, after the assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan, three subsequent Prime Ministers of Pakistan were from East Pakistan. Even Liaquat Ali Khan, if not considered a Muhajir, was also elected from former East Pakistan. The only Prime Minister

of this country since independence was, thus, Choudhry Muhammad Ali, until power passed into the hands of the military Generals. These East Pakistani Prime Ministers, with their quota of Cabinet members from that province, could readily have changed the situation if there was something to change, and the possibility of it present in the historical perspective. One could hardly rush to the conclusion that Shaikh Mujibur Rahman was the only East Pakistani who could deliver the goods for his people and no other.

The fact is on record that during the days of Field Marshal Muhammad Ayub Khan, East Pakistan had its greatest development. It was not because of any extraordinary love for East Pakistan, but because in the rising capacities the province had slowly grown by then to that standard of development that a faster progress was possible. As progress went still further, General Yahya eschewed the principle of parity and adopted the one-man-one-vote principle, providing East Pakistan with the edge over West as demanded by its population. The parity principle had been adopted by common consent of the represntatives of the two wings in 1956.

The stance adopted by the Awami League in 1971 for framing the new Constitution on the basis of the Six Points—which would have completely destroyed the Centre, was not, therefore, based on sound policies of politics, but to do away with the integrity of Pakistan, for which Mujib, in his own words, had worked since 1948.

Having got a clear majority in the new National

Assembly after the elections of 1970, Mujib had the undeniable chance of working at the Centre for the benefit of East Pakistan in the directions he claimed they needed, and it does not stand to reason that he should abandon it in favour of destroying the Centre, unless there were forces at work behind the scenes and Mujib was only a puppet in their hands. He had made accusations that the Armed Forces under General Yahya were not willing to forego power and transfer it to the elected representatives of the people. This was quite untenable, and even Yahya had stated that. The problem, however, arose when Mujib began to assert in his statements and public speeches that he was going to frame a Constitution on the basis of six points and he refused to budge from the stand inspite of discussions and efforts to persuade him by the West Pakistan leaders.

As it happened, during the whole of the month of December, 1970, after the election results were announced, Mujib kept his peace. People in general were very hopeful. The sweeping victory of the Awami League had, to all appearances, completely changed the political aspect of the country. Mujib could afford to give any assurances for the continuance of the tempo of West Pakistan's industrial progress, while taking steps to further develop East Pakistan, since he had absolute majority in the Parliament-to-be. It was even surmised that the capital as well as the Naval headquarters might be shifted to East Pakistan.

The shoe, however, started pinching when he categorically asserted that he was going to frame a

Constitution based on his six points. This would have meant not only the independence of East Pakistan but also of the provinces of West, with the Centre evaporating in smoke. It would have dealt a death-blow to Pakistan as a whole.

Now, an interesting feature of the situation was that few people in East Pakistan, including the leaders of the Awami League and the intellectuals, had any clear idea of what the six points were. For several years past political parties, students and trade union organisations in the province had been indulging in a game of different point-demands. There was the 11-point demand, eight point demand, nine point demand and so on, and the actual demands were never enunciated before the public. This helped further to confuse the people. The game of points was being played by the politicians to achieve their own ends, and this fact was utilised to the greatest measure by the Awami Leaguers. In their election speeches they talked of their six points and of the eleven-points of their student-organisation, and people heard their tall talk and big promises, presumed that the "points" would solve all as with a magic wand without, however, anybody being the wiser in real terms.

We have described in the earlier part of this chapter the manner in which the Awami League won the 1970 elections. The six points had been mentioned during the election speeches and the Party leadership was now in a position to say that it had won the elections on that basis, that the electors had given the Party a mandate to make the Canstitution on the basis of six points. Mujib had a clear majority in the Con-

stituent Assembly and he could just rush through an already-prepared Constitution based on his Six Points. This would have meant the death-knell of Pakistan. The move had to be resisted and the leader of the biggest political party of West Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, did so. He thereby saved the integrity of West Pakistan at least which Mujib was determined to demolish. It was in this context that he refused to attend the first session of the Constituent (or National Assembly) of Pakistan, after the elections. Bhutto told West Pakistan audiences so. But, surprisingly enough, there were a number of leaders in Pakistan who insisted that matters should be thrashed out within the Assembly, without appreciating the fact that with a clear majority, the Awami League could use the House to put its rubber-stamp on the Awami League draft and that would have become a legal document in the eyes of the world.

Simultaneously with the declaration of Mujib that the Constitution had to be based on six-points, underground preparations started to subvert the province once and for all. There was a great deal of gun-running, Indian cammandos poured into the countryside and along with them trouble-shooters from the Awami League began terrorizing all those who dared oppose the party. Throughout January 1971 while the secret preparations were afoot, Mujib watched for the reactions of the West Pakistan leaders. In February the Post and Telegraph workers went on strike in East Pakistan, the PIA overflights over India were disallowed, the hymn of hatred against the Armed Forces rose to remarkable proportions, so that most of them were

forced to remain in their barracks and a lot went on throughout the province which smacked of rebellion.

Mujib got his chance when the National Assembly session called for March 3 was postponed, and he came out into the open. The speech he made on March 7 was one of open defiance. A parallel government was set up, and the people, workers and Government servants were browbeaten into acting the way he wanted. The greatest factor which contributed to the success of these happenings was the overall uncertainty of the situation. No one, especially the Government servants, dared go against the orders of the biggest political party in the Parliament of the country for fear of reprisals when it came to power which it could have if the "negotiations" had succeeded at the last moment. It is also another proof of the fact that people hardly knew of the real aspirations of the Awami League which they took on their face value as declared by its leaders. The ease with which the Awami League members of the National as well as the Provincial Assemblies of East Pakistan slipped away to India immediately after the army action shows the plan and preparation that went behind the whole show of talks, discussions and negotiations.

The presence of some super-power behind the whole scheme is apparent from the fact that Yahya did not take the obvious action after the speech of Mujib on March 7. Otherwise a great deal of responsibility for what happened after March 25—the massacre and innocent blood of men, women and children, the terror that stalked the land—could have been averted.

Mujib's personality was a curious blend of down-to-earth cunning and political foolhardiness. Mentally, he was a very ordinary man, not well-educated, without any sense of history or economics. But, he instinctively understood the psychology of the Bengali mind and had the gift of the gab. The reason for this probably was that his own genius was as uninhibited as that of the people and he allowed his emotions a full rein neither controlled nor directed by science or knowledge. The Muslims of East Bengal could be divided into two different sections, both of them crushed and downtrodden by two centuries of dual tyranny—that of the British and the Hindu zemindars. One of these had managed to keep its Islamic character intact in spite of the long period of repression, mauled and battered though it was. The other had allowed itself to be influenced by the culture of the Hindus, taught by Hindu teachers, educated in Hindu-dominated institutions, and keeping Hindus company. Mujib belonged to the latter category. By nature a turbulent type, he had turned into an agitator. He was incapable of independent thinking and had to be led by others.

As long as Husseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy was alive, he remained the Fuehrer of the Awami League, and Mujib kept to his boundaries. But, when the former died, this organisation, lacking any other senior leader, accepted Mujib as its conscience-keeper. And a bad conscience-keeper he was, inspired and led by others! The phenomenon of parties being led by insincere and half-educated leaders is not new in the sub-continent. Mujib, however, excelled them all. For, he had grown up

partially alien to his own cultural background, and even religion did not form a subconscious director and controller in his case. He was the product of an intensely jealous mind—a natural consequence of two centuries of intense repression over his people—and a mediocre background, a result of the circumstances.

Among the real political giants of the period were people like Nurul Amin, Khawaja Nazimuddin, Khawaja Shahabuddin, Mahmud Ali, Khan Abdus Sabur Khan, Maulvi Tamizuddin Khan, Hamidul Haq Choudhry and several others. But the people failed to understand or appreciate them or their politics, as it did not play the tunes appealing to their unsophisticated minds. They reacted rather to the cliches of a Mujib who emerged as East Pakistan's Pied Piper of Hemelin and took the people to their destruction.

Subversive propaganda tried to build Mujib into a great genius, which he certainly was not. Stories were concocted about him which were supposed to go down in history as tales of a veritable "Father of the Nation" for which place he had cocked his hat and set his sights. But the whole plan crashed to the ground as it was based on false premises and incorrect assumptions. The Muslims had a history of their own behind them and, though influenced by geographical circumstances, were no part of a Bengali nation. The Hindus could be so termed as they were culturally, historically, linguistically and even religiously different from the rest of Hindu India, but not the Muslims.

A story was re-told again and again that Mujib, unable to take the railway train due to lack of finance,

cycled all the way to Delhi in early 1947, to place certain demands on behalf of the Bengali Muslims before the All India Muslim League High Command. This is a pure fabrication. Mujib, in 1947, had just been an up and coming agitator without a mind of his own. He merely carried errands for his bosses and those too within the circumference of metropolitan Calcutta. Another story is that of his leading a demonstration in the Dacca University in 1948 when the Quaid-e-Azam said that Urdu and Urdu alone was going to be the *lingua franca* of Pakistan. The charisma of the Great Leader was too great to leave any ground for such a demonstration. There was a little flutter in a section of the audience when he made the statement, quickly shushed by others in the vicinity. There was no shouting, demonstration or brouhaha. The story has been concocted to give greater credibility to the movement in favour of Bengali. In fact, demonstrations in early 1948 attempted by the Communists in the streets had failed to find sufficient support and had to be abandoned on other occasions when the Quaid was in Karachi.

Many of such legends have found currency even among the West Pakistanis, told and re-rold as they were by supporters of Mujib in the Government, but at a much later date. In actual fact, Mujib's own personality was so poor that no real leader in East Pakistan even gave him his support or hobnobbed with him on equal terms. The leadership of the Awami League was brand new. During the post-election period of 1970-71, the Party was dominated not by Mujib but by such other persons as Tajud-Din,

Nazrul Islam, Mushtaq Ahmad, Capt. Mansur and so on, especially Tajuddin, and Mujib was just a figure-head, taking his orders from his own henchmen and carrying them out.

The story of how these things were worked out is told in the following pages, preceded by a background of history to show how Muslim Bengal came to have an entity and a personality of its own, different and at cross-purposes from the rest of Bengal and there could hardly be any Bengali nationalism in the area.

CHAPTER 2

Islam in the East

The existence of a Muslim majority area in the eastern parts of India is a phenomenon which was not appreciated for a long time. Islam did not come to these parts following the spectacular conquering armies of the Muslims. It followed the arteries of trade which were given a phillip to by the rise of the religion in Arabia during the seventh century of the Christian era.

But, in order to fully appreciate the induction of the Muslims in the region, it would be necessary to understand first its geography as it is now and as it was more than a thousand years ago.

Bangladesh, or former East Pakistan, is one of the most densely populated regions of the world, with an area to-day of about 54,000 square miles and a population of over 80 million. In 1941, however, the population had been about 35 million and at the turn of the twentieth century only 20 million. A thousand years ago, it could hardly be more than a couple of million —a density of 40 to the square mile as against 1,600 now—nearly two-thirds of the thickness in the Chitta-

gong Hill Tracts, a region of hills, swamps and forests, and one-tenth of the average present density of Pakistan.

Consisting primarily of the delta of the Ganges-Brahmaputra river combine, the region was deep alluvium, swampy and overgrown with thick jungles. Ibn Batuta, writing in the fourteenth century after a visit to these parts, has described how the population hugged the big rivers and was so dense that as he sailed down the Surma and Sitalakhya from Sylhet to Sonargaon, it appeared like a continuous bazaar. As late as the seventeenth century, when Islam Khan sent the Mughal armies to conquer Chittagong from the Portuguese pirates and Mughs "by land and sea" a contingent of the forces landed on the Feni river near Mirsarai and "hacked its way through dense forest to Chittagong", an area which to-day is thickly populated and with little signs of the jungles that the Mughals had hacked through.

The picture of the past that emerges to our minds is that of a swampy, forest region in which the people skirted the giant rivers and extracted their living from cultivating the rich clearings in the vicinity. The rivers, however, were an open link with the outside world and ships—comparatively much smaller than now—could easily push through the estuary from the open sea and proceed to points far inland, helped by the tides.

In the 7th and the 8th centuries, most of the people living in the region were Buddhists, though under constant pressure from farther West from Brahmins. Buddhism primarily envisages a casteless society, while Brahmanism insisted on human compart-

ments, and there could hardly be any love lost between the two. While the Buddhists were, as a rule, hemmed-in by the sea and the hills, the swamps and the forests, the Brahmins could draw extensively on their militant manpower from the rest of India, and the former were obviously fighting a losing battle. It was in the midst of this see-saw struggle between two rigidly contrasting ways of life, that Muslim traders appeared on the scene in their ships, armed to the teeth against sea-robbers and antagonistic local monarchs, on their way from the Persian Gulf to the Far East and China. The Buddhists appealed to them for help against the Brahmins, coming to know of the most equitable society that the trading adventurers represented. Many of the Buddhists also got converted to Islam as it had a tremendous appeal for them.

Following the traditions of the Prophet, the Muslims left teachers and soldiers as they proceeded onwards after completing their transactions. Thus, at a very early period, there were found Muslim colonies interspersed with those of the Buddhists on the river banks of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra. The earliest known Muslim trader, saint and Mujahid known to the area is Hazrat Sultan Mahisawar, whose tomb still exists in the district of Bogra. He visited here in the ninth century, fought a battle with the Brahmins and was killed in the fray. The tale of his exploits, passed down by word of mouth, mentions the presence of already existing Muslim communities in the region and the quarrels started by the Hindus with them on the excuse of cow slaughter.

Sultan Mahisawar is reported to have brought

15,000 soldiers with him. After his death, they were left without a leader. Most of them settled down in various areas, taking to cultivation of land they cleared from the forests. In the same manner many others had settled down as they found the land extremely fertile, not requiring much labour for the production of good crops. With them were quite a number of artisans and craftsmen, who set about organising cottage industries and other crafts, especially in texiles.

These were through the days of vast international mercantile activity by the Muslims, described so glowingly in fiction form on the pages of the *Alaf Laila wa Laila*, "A Thousand Nights and One Night", more commonly and simply known as the Arabian Nights. But, probably with the decline of the Abbasi Empire, the spirit of adventure and population movements also grew less and did not spurt again until the great age of the Sufis.

When, however, Bakhtyar Khilji conquered the kingdom of Lakhnauti in the year 1204 A.D., there was already a flourishing Muslim community farther to the East. The episode of this Turkish soldier, conquering a slice of Empire with only eight persons, is a romantic one. Bakhtyar, an officer of the army of the Sharqi kingdom of Jaunpur guarding its eastern marches, took off on his own with a small contingent of force and, approaching Lakhnauti, proceeded ahead with only eight men, all disguised as traders in horse flesh, until they found entry to the house of Lakshman Sen when the Raja was at his lunch. Attacking suddenly, they put the guards into panic and the Raja escaped by a backdoor by boat, leaving Bakhtyar Khilji master of

the throne.

After some time, the Turk proceeded on an expedition to Tibet, the why and wherefore of which is not known, and got himself killed and his army destroyed. His lieutenants were left in control of a kingdom in Bangala and they squabbled with each other for dominance. Out of the melee, one Haji Muhammad Ilyas eventually gained an upper hand and set himself up as an undisputed ruler of the region. At this time, there were efforts made by Delhi to bring Bangala under its rule, but Ilyas Shah successfully defied the might of the distant capital of the Muslim Indian Empire.

The period of Chengiz and Halaku had come and gone. A reaction of thought and attitude had fallen like a blanket on the world of Islam. Mysticism had come to dominate it. Great teachers were spreading out for the spread of the religion and good men converting thousands with the example of their piety and service to humanity. While the Turks had expanded their hegemony from the kingdom of Lakhnauti farther East, saints and savants had been coming to the area as the new proselytising force and setting themselves up as beacon lights for the people. People in the eastern riverine areas were getting converted to Islam in large numbers. The Khiljis paid their respects to these teachers and saints, made grants to them of land where mosques, khanqahs and schools were built along with ample cultivable areas not only to maintain these but also to run *langarkhanas* where poor people could get their meal at any time or occasion they wanted. In

fact this practice continued throughout the Muslim period and was not only abolished when political power passed away from their hands but the already existing trust lands taken away.

During the Khilji period prior to Ilyas Shah, Bangala was a land of adventure, and soldiers of fortune were continuously proceeding to Lakhnauti and Sonargaon to find service in their army, and settling down in the region. Most of them were Turks and Pathans. Punjab did not have a separate entity of its own till then. It was part of the Muslim Empire—whether of India or of Iran—and many of the people from this part also went to Bangala to look for their destiny. Even Amir Khusraw, the great prodigy of the Turkish period visited Bangala and stayed there for some time.

People who lived in the region for some time, in the service of the Turkish army or administration, usually purchased property or were given forest lands as an award for their services, which they cleared and began cultivating for the support of their families. Thus forests began receding step by step and cultivable area expanding. We may say with confidence that a large proportion of this expansion was due to the industry and work of these Muslim settlers. It was also natural that communities of non-Muslim workers should follow to these new settlements as new areas of East Bengal were opened up and cultivation extended. But, they were generaly low-caste Hindus, who received better treatment from their Muslim employers and freedom to stick to their own religious and moral codes. Few of them got converted to Islam, but

they did a lot to influence the ways and customs of those who were cut off mostly from the outside world by forests and riverine tracts.

Haji Mohammad Ilyas, who made himself into Ilyas Shah, defied the authority of the Delhi Government. He was in the saddle when Ibn Batuta visited Bangala. The capital of the region had been shifted to Sonargaon, a place on a veritable island between the Sitalakhya river and the Meghna, apparently for its remarkable defensive position in the midst of large rivers.

Although the Sharqi Government of Jaunpur still existed, this open defiance of Delhi resulted in the blockade, for a time, of new blood for the Bangala armies. Ilyas Shah tried the experiment of recruiting and training purely native infantry regiments, known as the *paiks*. What was the actual worth of this army—mainly of the Hindus—can hardly be known. But, Zia-ud-Din Barni, writing about it, has ridiculed it in his *Tarikh-e-Firoz Shahi*. He writes :

> "The body of these *paikan* who call themselves 'fathers of Bangal', which Ilyas *the Bhangi* has gathered around him, are prone to throw about their hands (in a show of bravado) and shout that they would kill and destory, when there is no battle in sight. But, when actually a conquering army attacks them, they tremble, bow their heads down so low that it is easy for them to be cut off like vegetables....."

Since Barni wrote for the court of the Tughlaqs, he was bound to be prejudiced against Ilyas Shah the Rebel, who is termed *Bhangi* only to ridicule

him, this description may not be quite true. But it was very much in keeping with the account the East Bengal Regiment gave of itself during the Rebellion of 1971. Barni also states that these *paiks* called themselves "Abu-e-Bangal" which seems to be the origin of the word "Babu", which has been a title strictly for the Hindus of Bengal in the modern times. Whatever may be the worth of these infantry soldiers, Ilyas Shah managed to maintain his independence, and was the progenitor of a dynasty that ruled Bangala for the next two hundred years (1338-1538).

During this period, there were, however, two interesting episodes. Fear of Delhi had obviously forced the hands of the Ilyas Shahs to grant a good deal of liberty to the high-caste Hindu zemindars mostly from western and nothern part of Bangal, who constantly intrigued to wrest the rulership from Muslims. In the course of time, one such zemindar, from Dinajpur, named Ganesh, succeeded in capturing the throne in a coup. That friendly and good relations promoted by the Muslims with the Hindus, did not also promote an echoing goodwill in the hearts of the latter was made apparent by Ganesh, who picked out some of the outstanding *ulama*—probably on the ground that they were seditiously engaged—and had them executed. One of these was a son of Maulana Badr-e-Alam, an *alim* of great repute and held in veneration by all.

Maulana Badr-e-Alam wrote a secret letter to Sultan Ibrahim Sharqi of Jaunpur, requesting him to come to the help of the Muslims and save them from the depredations of the tyrant, who had also started to order the closing down of *madrassahs* and *khanqahs*

under his hegemony, which were centres of light and learning for the faithful. Ibrahim Sharqi promptly responded to the appeal, and came down on Bangala with a powerful army.

The moment this force entered the borders of the territories of Ganesh, the latter got cold feet. He immediately went out to meet Ibrahim and begged him to withdraw his forces. Maulana Badr-e-Alam was also present during the confabulations. After discussions, it was agreed that (*i*) Ganesh should abdicate forthwith; (*ii*) his son, Jadu, should ascend the throne after embracing Islam, and (*iii*) no action taken against the Muslims.

Jadu was only 15 at the time. He was converted to Islam publicly and ascended the *gaddi* under the name of *Alauddin Shah.* After the ceremonies had been performed, Ibrahim Sharqi withdrew his forces and returned to Jaunpur. But, once Ganesh came to know that there was no longer any danger, he once again deposed his son and put himself on the throne. The boy was to be converted again to Hinduism. But, here was a problem. Hinduism was a citadel which could not be entered into once a person had left it and joined the ranks of *melechs.* Ganesh called upon the Brahmins to solve the problem somehow.

The Brahmins advised him that he should have the figure of a cow made in gold. It should then be washed in the waters of the Ganges, and the washing trapped in golden vessels. Jadu was then to be bathed in this washing, which would then cleanse him of the impurities that had entered into him by becoming a Muslim and remaining with them for some time. This

procedure was ceremoniously gone through, and after that the golden cow and vessels were presented to the Brahmins as *shuddhi dan*. Ganesh, however, refrained from being too hard on the Muslims and their institutions for fear of bringing the Jaunpur Sultan once again with his army.

Jadu had been re-converted to Hinduism for all ostensible purposes. But, as a Prince, he was not welcomed by the Hindus who suffered his presence whenever there was any such occasion, and immediately after his company, would go and wash themselves. Jadu came to hate this. Four years later, when he was 19, Ganesh died and the young man ascended the throne. Rid of the vicious influence of his father, he promptly became a Muslim once again and this time called forth the Brahmins who had advised his re-conversion, made them disgorge the gold they had taken away from Ganesh and executed them. He gave full respect and honour to the Muslim *ulama* and tried his best to undo the harm done to them by his father. He did not rule very long, however, and died after a number of years and on his demise, once again a Prince from the house of Ilyas Shah was placed on throne by the nobles.

This episode has been generally suppressed by the Hindu historians of Bangala, who found a greater prestige during the British days while Muslim chronicles were lost or discredited. It brings to the surface one important fact, that in spite of all the good treatment and encouragement of the Brahmins received at the hands of the Muslim rulers, an innate hatred rankled continuously in their minds and they would miss no

opportunity of trying to get even with them, and to do this would not consider anything too low or dishonourable. Comparable to this can be the role played by the Hindu minority in East Pakistan who received the best consideration at the hands of the majority, but never refrained from intriguing against the Government, in trying to subvert the local people and eventually lending a hand in writing the final chapter of East Pakistan's separation from the rest of the country.

The Ilyas Shahi rulers who came after this episode were so much afraid of the local forces that they imported negro slaves from Africa to act as their personal bodyguard. As usually happens in such cases also, one of the ambitious guards, Kafur, grabbed power for a short while. He, however, was a good Muslim and built many mosques and *madrassahs* during the short period he ruled until replaced by a Prince of the Royal House. A mosque built by Kafur still exists just beyond the airport road level-crossing at Dacca in what was formerly known as the Karavan Bazaar. This interlude was a short one.

After a short break in the stream of new migrants coming to Bangala during the days of Ilyas Shah, the stream once again resumed itself. Bangala was an area of comparative peace and plenty, and not only Turks, but also Pathans and Punjabis came to join the army. There were many artisans and craftsmen who entered the kingdom and settled down here. It was actually during this period that the cotton textile industry was firmly established and silk was grown in plenty. In the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the growing of cotton was probably introduced the earlier by Arabs and later on this area

was known as the "Kapas Mahal". Simal cotton is still produced in the Tracts, though the production of textile cotton has practically disappeared now.

The Ilyas Shahs promoted the growth of the ordinary cotton in other parts of their kingdom, and new craftsmen coming from the north-west brought the know-how for the weaving of excellent fabrics. Cloth was also manufactured from silk produced locally. Chinese travellers visiting the area during this period have recorded in glowing terms of the quality and excellent workmanship of cloth produced in Bengal, both of cotton and silk. The development of industry was also helped by the prevalence of an economic and financial system which did not involve any interest, and the value of money remained constant, the prosperity of the people growing in proportion to their effort and labour. Bengal had been developing during Muslim rule as a highly advanced industrial base for the whole of the sub-continent.

During the two centuries that the Ilyas Shahs held sway, new settlements were springing up everywhere. Jungles were being cleared and the populated areas generally creeping inland from the river banks. The soil being very fertile, as it was the deepest alluvium in the world enriched by the decaying vegetation for years, and the precipitation being ample in combination with heat, growth of crops was rapid and no great effort was needed to prepare the fields. Floods, when the mighty rivers overflowed their banks during the rainy season, further renewed the soil and the production capacity was eternally maintained.

As has been mentioned before, the new influx of

settlers was mainly of the Muslims who came to the region to find new prospects in the service of the Muslim kings, and as artisans and craftsmen. A large number of low-caste Hindus also followed them to take up jobs with them. Of caste Hindus, however, there were few who came to the area, excepting in its western parts where they were protected and provided service by the Hindu zemindars who maintained themselves in the area, under Muslim tolerance.

It was just about the time Ilyas Shah had established his hegemony and defied the authority of Delhi that Ibn Batuta arrived on his way from the Maldives to China. He has noted in his famous travelogue how he reached what is now known as Chittagong and from there proceeded overland to Sylhet where he wished to pay homage to Hazrat Shah Jalal, who was at that time alive and engaged in his great task of teaching and converting, close to the foothills of the Khasi and Jaintia range. After staying with the great saint for some days, he took boat on the Surma and floated down to Sonargaon, the then capital of Bangala. At Sonargaon, he took ship for Java *en route* to China. Of his trip down the river from Sylhet, he points out that it was a veritable bazar all along the route as a continuous populated area skirted the river banks. He has especially mentioned the cheapness of the goods and their being plentiful. A goat, he noted, was worth two dirhams while a young girl was valued at only one! He was also impressed by the excellence of the cloth and silk fabrics available in the kingdom.

The court language of the Turks was, as a rule, Persian, as was the language of most of the settlers.

The former Buddhist population used one of the offshoots of Sanskrit, and the Hindus also spoke a mixture of Sanskrit and Hindi. The Ilyas Shahs patronized the language of the minorities, as one of the cornerstones of their policy. This language could be anything but the Bengali which gained currency during the nineteenth century under the patronage of the British. Hindu writers have, however, made a good deal of capital out of this by telling the Muslims of twentieth century Bengal that this language was Bengali, visualising the modern one, though the old language of the common people at that time could be called "Bangali" by virtue of it being a native to a region of Bangala. Even amongst the masses, Persian could have got much more mixed up with the local dialects than even in northern India, due to extensive Muslim settlements.

The Ilyas Shahi dynasty was finally destroyed by Sher Shah Suri and his Lohani generals. But the great monarch and his administrative genius expired soon enough and while the rest of the sub-continent once again passed into the hands of the Mughals, Bangala was divided into twelve big zemindaris, all of which were ruled by Pathans excepting one. These were known as the "Bara Bhuiyans". They maintained their independence and rule until they were overwhelmed by Akbar's General, Monem Khan, and later by Man Singh, who had to subdue each of these "satrapies" one by one. Bangala once again became a province of the Indian Empire.

The Mughal Emperors fully realized the importance of their newly acquired province and imposed an

iron rule on it. Islam Khan, a great Mughal Subedar of Bangala, consolidated the regime. He annexed the parts which had been wrested from the former rulers by interlopers from outside. The island of Sandwip had been under the rule of Portuguese piratical adventurers, Chittagong was also dominated by a precarious confederacy of the Arakanese Mughs and Portuguese sea-robbers. International trade had suffered tremendously due to these foreign marauders sitting constantly on the region's ocean doorstep. The pirates would very often sail right up the Meghna and the Ganges and raid villages and towns as far inland as Sonargaon itself, take all sorts of booty including male and female slaves. The populace cried in terror and dismay. Islam Khan shifted his capital from Sonargaon to a point which he called Dacca, and there built a fleet of ships, with which he began attacking the pirates. The route having been cleared, he despatched an expedition to Chittagong, with his son, Haibat Khan, in overall command, attacking simultaneously from the landward and seaward sides and uprooting the Portuguese from the whole of the area, including Sandwip and Hatia.

With complete peace restored over the whole of the territory, the Mughals applied themselves to the rapid development of peaceful persuits. Industry was reorganised, agriculture given a new boost and a new period of prosperity ushered in Bangala. After Islam Khan, Prince Khurram—who later on became the Emperor Shahjehan—was appointed Governor of the province. Later on, Shah Shuja was another prince-Subedar and he developed the communications of the

area extensively, built a road to Akyab in Burma and increased productivity.

It was during the days of Shaista Khan that Bangala achieved its maximum point of prosperity. The price of rice fell down to 8 maunds for the rupee and there was plenty of everything with everybody. When this level changed and prices again rose, Shaista Khan ordered the northern gate of Dacca built up and declared that it shall be opened again only when once more prices will achieve the same levels, which they did not and the gate was never opened again until destroyed by the ravages of time.

The level of industrial production, already large during the Ilyas Shahi period, once again rose and the main items were textiles and indigo. It has been stated that the exports from the port of Narayangunj alone had gone up to rupees one crore per year (the historian has mentioned that this was customs duty, but others have corrected to say that it was the value of total exports). Taking cost of foodgrains as the index of monetary values, a rupee of that time was more or less equivalent to Rs. 960 of the present day, and the exports of Narayangunj were thus about Rs. 960 crore per year. A rupee was, obviously, so valuable that cowries were legal tender, the value being 5 cowries to the pie and 192 pies to the rupee. It may be mentioned here that since at the time the financial arrangement was interest-free and European style capitalism with its absentee profit-sharing system had not yet been introduced, commodity-price equations were governed by the simple law of supply and demand. There was, thus, very little fluctuation in the value of money and

the export figure indcates the real standard of prosperity. Industries were generally on cottage basis (industrial revolution was still to come) and each individual earned equivalent to his productive capacity in any direction.

Throughout the 16th century, the Indian Ocean was dominated by the Portuguese adventurers who were warring for its domination with the Arabs, generally taking to piracy on the high seas and on the littoral. It was not until the beginning of the seventeenth century that the British, the Dutch and the French also entered the field of freebooting, but more inclined towards organised trading. While many Portuguese outlaws had taken service in the Mughal armies as gunners and otherwise, the British were approaching Emperor Jehangir for permission to trade. So were other European nations like the Dutch and the French. Permission granted, these people established their "factories" at specific points stipulated by the Mughal rulers, and hired or built houses at the capital of Bangala, Dacca, to set up their liaison with the Government. Dacca came to have its own British, French and Dutch sections.

The Subedar of Bangala, especially when he was a Prince of the Royal House, himself entered the industrial and trading field. He employed male and female agents, who went round to distribute raw materials to artisans and craftsmen and then collecting the finished products from them against proper wages. In Dacca city, for example, many ladies of the families of the nobility engaged in their spare time in gold and silver filigree work on cloth and made substantial

earnings thereby. The families of the farmers spun cotton grown on their fields into yarn and did some weaving also. Thus agriculturists contributed to industry and did not wholly depend on the product of the soil for all their income. Thus everyone had enough to go round and the prosperity reached the lowest level of the people.

Muslims in East Bengal since their coming to these parts in the 8th and 9th centuries and later during the days of the Turks, Ilyas Shahs and the Mughals, always had a position of dominance and respect. In their settlements, they engaged low-caste Hindu labour to perform ordinary chores for them, even on agricultural land. Their Governments gave full protection to these non-Muslim minorities and they were treated fully in accordance with the Islamic law of equity. Some of the Ilyas Shahs encouraged them in their cultural pursuits, especially in the promotion of the language, which was a different Bengali from the one developed during the 19th century.

Ever since the 13th century, there was a large influx of Sufis from Iran and Turkey to this area who preached a new philosopy while at the same time teaching the common people in their *madrassahs* and *khanqahs*. The latter were also centres of feeding the poor, irrespective of their religion or caste. Thus, with their multifarious activities and humane treatment, they exercised a great influence on the mind of the Hindus. Many got converted to Islam. Conversion being a one-way traffic in Hindu society, this alarmed their religious leaders. While philosophers like Vidyapati began explaining Hinduism much in the manner

of the Sufis, the matter of castes was still a great stumbling block in their way of convicing the people, especially the low-caste Hindus.

This anomaly gave rise to a philosopher by the name of Chaitanya who initiated a movement in which everyone had a right to prayer and devotion. The doors of membership of this movement were thrown open to all castes, classes and sexes and new devotional songs were written. It caught the imagination of large number of people and the movement threatened to submerge Hinduism. But, Brahmin intelligence once again came to the rescue. The movement was diverted into channels where it was recognised as a separate sect of Hinduism and generally looked down upon for the extreme sexual promiscuity amongst them due to a free intermingling of males and females. The *bairagi* movement as it is called, turned out wandering minstrels, men and women living together without the benefit of marriage or ceremony in shameless freedom. During the British period, the Brahmins or zemindars, utilised the *bairaganis* as their spies and agents for immoral alliances. The word "*kutni*" in Bengali means diplomacy but has a different connotation in northern India.

Some Muslims also joined this movement because its philosophy was similar to the mysticism of the sufis, and some of the poetry written by them has been extolled for its virtues. Hindu writers, such as Jadunath Sarkar, have gone into ecstasies over philosophy of *bairagism.* The *baraigi* movement, encouraged by the caste-Hindus during the British period, practically died out after independence as its patrons had gone

over to India and they were treated in a manner their morals demanded, not suitable for a decent society.

The language of the people of this area was initially influenced by Arabic, which the traders from Arabia and the Persian Gulf brought with them. But, living in the region for quite a long time, a fresh dialect which was a mixture of the language of the Buddhists and Arabic was developed. The dialect spoken even now at Chittagong and Sylhet is quite different from that of the rest of Bengal, differing from each other too. The rest of Bengal was later on influenced largely by Persian, which remained the court language for 731 years (from 1204 to 1835). On the one hand there was a great deal of intermingling between Persian, Arabic and Bengali in the whole of the area, at a later stage, Urdu also came to this region, especially among the ruling and administrative sections, who were, as a rule, all Muslim. In many of the cities of East Bengal, Urdu was spoken as a special dialect with a great deal of Bengali influence on it, but still Urdu. How this language was later replaced by a new one is a subject to be discussed at length in the next chapter.

The hold of the Central Government on the Subedari of Bengal became lax after the death of Aurangzeb, with the general decay of the Mughal Empire. The provincial headquarter was shifted from Dacca to Murshidabad which later on became the centre of intrigue and power politics. It was natural that along with it, the industrial calibre of the area also weakened. But for quite a long time it did

not, until a new element was introduced—the foreign commercial adventurers.

Indigo became a prize product for the Europeans, since it was an excellent material for textiles at the time when Europe began manufacturing its own cloth. Until then it was produced mainly for local use and the best results obtained from it. Dacca's muslin, however, was the important luxury item which the British, Dutch and French "factors" purchased from the countryside, took it to the "factories" where it was baled and put on ships. Most of this work of purchasing from the interior was done by the agents and *gumashtas*, who took service with the foreigners. These were, as a rule, Hindus who also looked after the domestic needs of the European employees of the companies. Muslims did not care for service with the *firangis* as a rule.

The Hindus—mostly of the lower castes—charged their own prices for the goods they purchased in the name of their masters, and, prices being very low, made huge profits for themselves. The factors and writers who came all the way from their homes to live in a strange land indulged in a lot of drinking and rowdyism and left the task of purchasing and other jobs to their native Hindu servants, who became very rich. They built places in Murshidabad and Hooghly and began lending money to the rulers or their rivals and thus became involved in political intrigue. In spite of all their wealth, they were still not given much honour and respect by the Muslims who knew and understood their background. This rankled in their minds and made them hate the *melechs* all the more.

The bawdiness of the Europeans was very well

known, and they were restricted to their factories by law. But, once in a while, they would emerge and create a lot of disturbance. The British, who were based at Hooghly, created such a disturbance during the Subedari of Shaista Khan, that the latter had to come down himself to chastise them. He was so incensed that he decided to push them out of the town altogether. On representations being made by the chief agent of the East India Company, they were later allowed to build a factory farther down the Hooghly at a point which was considered to be most unhealthy. There was a shallow lake in the background which dried up during the winter and the fish and other amphibious animals died and rotted on the land, creating a terrible stench and spreading disease. The English built their factory at the spot and later on a fort, to be known as Fort William. Here was developed in over a century the City of Calcutta.

The Europeans continued to have a secondary position in the country and were considered as pariahs in the beginning. It was the Hindu agents of theirs who first began to take part in the intrigues for power amongst the Mughal nobility as the authority of the Central Government at Delhi weakened. Unable to do much, the Hindus eventually brought the British into the field and acted as their spies and agents in every way. Some evil geniuses came to head the Company at the time and they fully utilised the opportunity to develop their own position. Eventually, they emerged as a third power meddling between two rival factions for the rule of Bengal. This part is well-known in history and we need not go into details. With

the defeat of Serajuddowla in the Battle of Plassey in 1757 at the hands of Lord Clive, through the intrigue of the Seths, who persuaded Mir Ja'afer to let down his master and relative, their domination of Bengal was complete. At Plassey the British force was a mere few thousands, while Serajuddowla could have easily won the day had it not been for the fact that his own Commander-in-Chief let him down, refusing to fight when in the field.

Settlement of Muslims migrating from the North-West had continued unabated until the very time of the British triumph at Plassey. The army of Serajuddowla consisted almost wholly of Pathans, Persians and Punjabis. The British overlords ordered Mir Ja'afer to disband his force of 80,000, which he did. Most of these men settled down in East Bengal after their discharge from service and took to farming. They generally occupied lands in the district of Mymensingh and Tangail, where they cleared the forests and began farming in a highly fertile and productive area.

Considering the long history of Muslim migrations to East Bengal and their settlements, the possible breakdown in percentages of the various types of the population can be as follows :—

Muslim Settlers from North-West, including Pathans, Punjabis, Turks, Persians and Arabs... ...	0 per cent
Converts from Buddhism ...	20 per cent
Converts from Hinduism ...	10 per cent
Persent Hindus, Buddhists etc. ...	10 per cent

This was the shape of things at the time of the coming of the British. It was greatly changed under the aegis of the imperialists with a greater influx of caste Hindus and others under their patronage, a story of which will be told in the following pages, and how these Hindus came to have a position of power and strength while the Muslims were reduced to the status of serfs.

CHAPTER 3

From Rulers to Serfs

The story of the transformation of the Muslims of East Bengal—numerous, dominant, rulers in their own native and adopted home—from their position of importance to that of worse than serfs, is one of the most tragic tales of history, reminiscent of the shades of Andalusia. The most unfortunate factor of the story is that while this transformation was taking place, and afterwards, records and evidence were tampered with, suppressed or re-created at will, so that the true perspective of the tale may never come to light and responsibilities apportioned.

Imperialism, as it developed in the West, has always had the habit of tolerating little in recorded history which was ever to cast a shadow over its own name. A most blatant of blood-sucking colonial era has been presented as the White Man's Burden, and fleecing of subject nations provided the name of benevolence. Histories were written by apparent toadies who rubbed off the inelegant parts and, instead, put in distortions which showed the new rulers

in a much better light than they deserved. Of this very type were works like the *Seir-e-Mutakhireen*, published in the nineteenth century. As for Hindus, they vied with each other in putting the tar on the Muslim period, and those amongst them who extolled the virtues of an alien tyranny were always applauded and placed on a high social pedestal. Of many such is Jadunath Sarkar, paid for his dishonest recapitulation of past events, with a knighthood. The printing press being wholly in the hands of the rulers, only such records gained currency which had received the approval of the Government of the day. As a result there is but little of extant source to tell new generations in independent Pakistan of the way the Muslims in East Bengal were transformed from an esteemed community of a high level of cultural accomplishment, to a grovelling, impoverished mass of terror-stricken humanity.

In 1757, the Hindu-British combine had crushed the independent Muslim Subedari of Bengal at the battle of Plassey, the Nawab Serajuddowla having been defeated with the help of a traitor and then ignominiously murdered at the hand of one of his own henchmen. In 1763, the "Honourable" East India Company obtained a contract for the collection of revenue from the province in the name of the weak and greedy scions of the House of Timur at Delhi dominated by upstarts. This was an unheard-of novelty in history, for a trading company of foreigners being given the right to impose taxes and collect revenues ruled by others. No revenues can be gathered unless the tax-gatherer is backed by power to impose its will on the taxed. The British obviously provided this power. Former Hindu

gumashtas or trade agents, were installed as "sub-contractors" of reveuue from specified areas, each one of them under a British "Collector." The ban on keeping of arms by the Muslims, maintenance of regular bands of riff-raffs imported from northern India by the Hindu agents, known as "lathials," and the army of tommies and petty Government functionaries with the police assisting them wholeheartedly were allowed to operate with the most tyrannical and cruel of methods. Any village, refusing or delaying the payment of any kind of imposition, was forthwith burnt to ashes, the womenfolk carried away and the men put to death. The seal of legality was put on these depredations by the appearance of a "*piadah*" supposed to be carrying the edict of the Court, but in most cases did not have any, and he was invariably a Hindu.

These depredations, aimed at subduing a once militant Muslim population, continued for thirty years, until one generation was replaced by another which had seen nothing but the heavy hand of the tyrants and was willing to surrender. When this was achieved, the "Honourable" East India Company resorted to the Permanent Settlement of 1793, by virtue of which each of these Hindu sub-contractors was confirmed in his "possession" of the land from which he was collecting revenue for his masters.

Who were these new zemindars or "Rajas" who now owned land in East Bengal? The story of their rise is an interesting tale of sordid intrigue and political aggrandisement.

The charter of the East India Company had been granted by Queen Elizabeth I, in the year 1600, when

Emperor Jehangir sat on the throne at Delhi, soon after Sir Thomas Roe had brought an Embassy to his court and obtained permission to trade. East Bengal at the time was a very prosperous area, industrialized on a vast scale and producing excellent fabrics, indigo, hides and skins and spices, much in demand in Europe. The British established a "factory" at Hooghly, where they received the goods purchased from various parts, packed them in bales and put them on the ships bound for England.

The Englishmen, who came to the sub-continent at the time, were a bawdy, hard-drinking lot, boorish and uncivilised from the standards of culture then prevalent in the sub-continent. For their rowdyism and bad manners they were disallowed to come out of their "factories" and associate with the local population. Muslims, as a rule, represented a cultured and noble community and they could hardly take service with the foreigners, and the English had to employ Hindus, especially of the lower castes, not only to act as their agents for the purchase of goods, but also to arrange for their living in the hot climate and serve them as domestic personnel. These low-caste Hindu domestic servants and agents, cheated their employers in every possible way and while they provided them with the rich materials produced in these parts for profitable trade in Europe, they themselves grew wealthy through enormous gains obtained during the course of their operations.

Ships from Europe usually took about a year to reach all the way from home ports to India, and the sea-route was beset by the dangers of piracy on the

high seas and the stormy nature of the oceans *en route.* Those of the "writers" (clerks) and "factors" who came over were scarcely of a strong character and plausible morality. They imported strong "Shiraz" wine from the Persian Gulf area, later known as "Sherry" or bibbed locally-produced spirits provided to them by their low-caste Hindu servants. The latter also brought to their beds local women, from whom the white men had children who were neither Indian nor European, but a mixed and bawdy set. For their turbulence, the English merchants were often chastised by the Mughal Government and at one time, following a drunken attack on the city population of Hooghly, Nawab Shaista Khan himself came down on them, removed them from that city, to stew in the unhealthy and evil-smelling terrain of a point further south where a shallow lake existed and in summer dried up to leave a lot of rotting fish on the land. Here, the leader of the commercial community, Job Charnock, built a factory and continued his trading more tamely. A century later, this small station had grown into the great metropolis of Calcutta.

With the weakening of the Central Government at Delhi, the Subedars of distant provinces asserted their *de facto* independence and quarrelled with each other constantly for the areas they were to govern. The former agents and domestic servants of the English company had by now grown fabulously rich, built palatial houses at the capital such as Murshidabad, Dacca and Hooghly. They were always ready to lend money to one or the other of the contenders to the provincial gaddi, and this way entered the whirlpool of intrigue and power-politics. Their hatred for the

Muslims was, however, unabated, not only because of the long Muslim rule over the Hindus but because the *Seths* were not held in high esteem at the courts in spite of their enormous riches, but treated as lowly, kowtowing worms before the Muslim nobility. They could foresee that their interests could better be served if the erstwhile traders could be brought into the vortex of politics and made to succeed where they had failed. Eventually this policy triumphed.

It was through these Hindu collaborators that the Englishmen addressed themselves to the task of collecting revenue from the cultivators, husbandmen, zemindars, working industrialists in 1763. Industries in East Bengal were of a cottage type. Small-scale working partnerships were setup between producers and traders, based on equitable dealings without any interest or usury entering into them. It was an Islamic system. It lasted only until the Hindu-British combine came on the scene. These working partnerships were broken up. Raw material was no longer provided to the workers against definite wages for work done. Instead, cash was offered on interest against produce which was attached in advance for the amount. The producers of both the farm and industrial goods became impoverished while the Hindu usurers grew to great wealth.

After the transfer of the *Diwani* to the East India Company, not only did agriculture deteriorate, the production of manufactured goods also declined. Poverty began to stalk the land, once considered the most prosperous of the provinces of the Mughal Empire in India.

Muslims could have resisted this change, but the upsetting of the whole agrarian system hit the agricultural production to such a degree that six years after the transfer of the *Diwani* to the Company, in 1769-70 a famine of the most terrible intensity hit East Bengal. It has been stated that people resorted in their agony to eat poisonous roots of plants and leaves of trees. There were, it is said, even cases of canabalism. More than a million died of starvation; others became too emaciated and weak to do much work. Others, again who had laid aside parts of their riches for land or for industry, spent it away for survival. The back of the Muslim resistance was broken even before it could organize itself.

This famine, as others in East Bengal since that time (in 1943 and 1974), was wholly man-made. In 1769, the area was not so burdened with over-population as it is now. But the cultivable area was only enough to support the existing population in plenty, provided it was cultivated in peace. After 1763, the Hindu and British had been making it difficult for the husbandmen to look after their land. They had most often to flee the land on which they depended for their living, in order to escape the zemindar's *lathials*, or the British soldiers. They took to the forests so that from there they could carry on their resistance. In other cases, the exorbitant demands of the tax-gatherers forced them to be dispossessed and there was no other person to take over the cultivation. To this may be added the incidence of draught and floods. The net result was that production continued to deteriorate, until by 1769 there was little of it, and this was

forthwith taken over by the zemindars and carried to the cities or locked up in the godowns. The Muslims—the cultivators of the land—starved.

The Hindus, the new aristocratic class of East Bengal, were hardly touched by the famine. It allowed a free hand to the tax-gatherers to ride it roughshod over the Muslims. Yet another quarter of a century was required before the British could instal these Hindu Babus into the saddle as zemindars, recognizing their ownership of land. Lord Cornwallis instituted the Permanent Settlement in 1793, whereby the erstwhile domestic servants, pimps and agents of the writers and factors of the East India Company became the hereditary proprietors of land cultivated by the Muslims, for them to dispense with it as they pleased or dispose it off in any manner they liked.

The zemindars brought with them a host of others who were put in charge of sub-divisions of land-holdings for which they paid stipulated sums as rent. Thus, between the first zemindar and the cultivator there were a large number of sub-zemindars, the stages extending to fifty in many areas, from the farmer to the landowner, practically all of them absentee, battening on the results of the sweat of the brow of the Muslim cultivator. These zemindars and sub-zemindars collected their dues from East Bengal, built palaces in Calcutta, indulged in luxurious living and expanded their wealth through trade and industry.

After the famine of 1769, steps were taken to rehabilitate the producers on their lands, and with it began the operation of usurious activity. "Sahas"—hereditary Hindu money lenders—came into the field,

who lent money on exorbitant rates of interest. The stranglehold of these usurious moneylenders put the stamp of perpetual poverty on the Muslims. Once they were advanced some money, to make provision of the in-puts on their land, and after the land gave out its produce, a large portion of it was taken away by the landlord, and most of the balance was used in paying away the interest of the money-lender. Hardly enough remained for the cultivator to enable him to live more than hand-to-mouth for the period until the next season. Some of the areas gave out two produces of rice, others even three. But, in spite of this the farmer was never rid of the enormous charge on his output. He hardly could afford more than a loincloth for his body and a few earthen chattels for his household. He usually took only two meals in a day which consisted of little more than cooked rice and a little salt or a green chilli or two.

The situation was further exacerbated by the continuance of a shadow of certain ceremonials which were reminiscent of the days of prosperity, such as those at the time of curcumcision, marriage or religious festivals. Whatever margin was left was usually consumed by these occasions, if it did not tie the family to further debts. If some of the farmers were fortunate enough to buy land, they were soon dispossessed by foreclosure against their debts or other tyrannical laws.

One of these laws was known as the "sunset law". It stipulated that if any of the farmers owning land was unable to pay the rent by the sunset of a certain date, it had to be auctioned or attached without any grace period being allowed. This law was obviously

meant for the Muslims, as practically all those who were affected by it were these people.

The zemindars imposed taxes at will. There were not only the regular rates, but charges at the time of some Pujas, of which there were innumerable, on the occasion of the birth of a child in the household of the lord, or a marriage. At one time, a tax was imposed on the keeping of beards by Muslims. The rate of this tax was Rs. 2.50 per year* which, according to the monetary value of the time, was an enormous imposition. To pay off these taxes, Muslims were occasionally forced to borrow from the money-lenders and once they did so, they could never get rid of the burden.

The Muslims had a large number of land-grants which had been endowed to them during the Mughal times, to maintain schools and *khanqahs* which distributed free food to the poor. Some of these endowments were in the families of scholars and saints of note running perennially as *waqfs*. Most of such lands were tax-free and hence were known as *la-khirajdar*.

In 1798, five years after the Permanent Settlement, an interesting technique was used to deprive the Muslims of the ownership of these lands, when it was known that in spite of the Settlement, a few families still remained in possession of some. Notices were hung on the offices of the Collectors asking all those who owned or looked after *la-khirajdar* lands to register them within one year with the Office of Land Records. These notices were in English, although the court language was still Persian and few Muslims could be

*Equivalent to Rs. 750 to-day.

found to know the language. It was usual to announce such notifications which required action from the public through the beat of drum: "*Hukum Badshah ka, zor Company Bahadur ka, sab logon ko muttale' kia jata hai keh....*" But in this case no such announcement was made by the beat of drum, and few people knew of it until the stipulated one year elapsed and then the *la-khirajdar* lands were resumed.

Even if in some cases the *mutawallis* and others came to know of the order, there were other difficulties in the way of registration. Some of the endowments were made by verbal orders, honoured by the officials, and the trustees left unmolested in the enjoyment of the produce of the land. There was no chance of these being registered at all. In other cases, documents issued more than a century before, were eaten away by white ants or otherwise destroyed and could not be produced, even if the trustees had any knowledge of the Company's orders.

The net result was that a very large number of such properties were resumed by the Government of the East India Company and passed on to the Hindus. This was a terrible stroke on the Muslims of Bengal, as most of the *madrassahs* teaching basic knowledge to the people had to be closed down, being run by such trusts. The Muslims had no financial strength of their own to set up new institutions or take over those which were being run through the proceeds of the trust lands. These institutions disseminated Islamie education to the alumni and they were thus deprived of it. An effort was made to set up a Muslim College at Calcutta under the supervision of the Company

officials in early nineteenth century, as Muslims could not get admission to the Presidency or the Fort William colleges. This effort also failed as English officials were to look after the working of the "Calcutta Madrassah" and poked their nose in everything, from the syllabus to the appointment of teachers.

In early nineteenth century, the Islamic system for the dissemination of justice was still in vogue. Muslim law was enforced through Qazis and the Persian language was utilized in the Courts. But the Company was preparing to introduce its own law based on the British system of jurisprudence. The Indian Penal Code was drafted in English and other laws also framed. When they were ready, Persian was displaced by English and the new laws introduced by 1835. This threw out of job the remaining Muslims who were employed as Qazis or in other departments doling out justice to the people. There were hardly any Muslims versed enough in the English language to take jobs in the new judicial arrangements or as lawyers; all of them were taken over by the Hindus.

Muslims had conquered part of Bengal in 1204 and since that year right up to 1835 the court language of the region was Persian. It was also the language of the armed forces, except the *Paiks* of Ilyas Shah, and of the innumerable teachers, sufis and missionaries of Islam who flocked to this area during this time. Earlier the Arabs and Persians who came to the deltaic region by sea, must have brought Arabic with them. In fact the impact of these languages on Bengal was even greater than it was in northern India, where a collusion of Persian and Hindi produced Urdu as the language

of the common people. Judging now, it appears that nothing of this sort happened in Bengal, which seems to be an historical anomaly. History, however, does not admit of such anomalies. A distinct language of the area, as we have glimpsed, did develop, while Urdu was taken to the courts of Murshidabad and Dacca, where it was spoken in numerous homes right upto 1947. But, the Hindu-British combine took studied and definite measures to kill this language as soon as they were fully in the saddle, as a part of their economic and cultural assult against the Muslims.

Two most important factors helped the enemies of the Muslims. The first was the setting up of the Baptist Mission Press at Calcutta in 1798, and the second was the establishment of the Fort William College. By 1804, the Baptist Mission Press had devised printing types of the new Bengali language assisted by the Hindu professors and savants of the Fort William College at Calcutta. Two of the professors of the Fort William College, since its inception, were Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and later on they were joined by Bankim Chandra Chatterji and others. They devised the new or "modern" Bengali which was quite different from the spoken and written language of Bengal till the end of the eighteenth century. It was made up mostly of Sanskritic words to such an extent that when a more idiomatic and flowery language was written, it actually became Sanskrit.

Unfortunately Muslims all over the world have not studied and assessed the role of the printing press on the overall demolition of their own sense of values and the introduction of new ones. Just as the Baptist

Mission Press (and others which followed) did this work in Bengal, in the Middle East, Arab nationalism following ideas of geographical nationalism, was introduced by the printing press set up in Beirut which eventually demolished the links between the Arabs and the Turks. That, however, is a different story.

In Bengal the institution of the Bengali printing type in the newly-installed printing plants, began turning out text-books in the new Bengali which were taught in all schools. It may be remembered that they were the only text-books and anyone studying at the schools and colleges of the time had to read them. Later on, a new literature in Bengali was developed which was all in the so-called "modern" or Hindu Bengali and hundreds of thousands of such books were printed and read by people everywhere. Muslims could neither find a press to have their own works in poetry or prose printed, nor text-books of any kind introduced in schools. For nearly sixty years from the inception of printiug in Bengal, not a single Muslim poet or writer of note distinguished himself or came up in Bengal. It is proof enough, if proof is required, of the fact that the Muslim considered the new Bengali as an alien language and could not take to it easily. The first of such Muslim writers and poets was Kaikobad, followed by Ismail Shirazee and others, who produced their works near the end of the 1850's. When they did, they restricted themselves to the production of themes relating to Islamic history, and it is of significance that the story of Karbala was a subject of absorbing interest for them. It is apparent that even these poets and litterateurs also came up because they were born or educated after the

abolition of Persian as the court language in 1835, when some of them were forced to learn the new language.

What was the language of the Muslims of Bengal during this period? Histories written by or under the influence of Hindus have particularly avoided this subject. But we can find some inkling by indirect means. In 1863, Nawab Abdul Latif was called upon to give evidence before a British Government's Commission on Education as to why the Muslims of Bengal were unable to partake of the English or Anglo-Vernacular education. Surprisingly enough, he told the Commission that *the language of the Muslims of Bengal was Urdu* while the medium of instruction in the local school was Bengali in the primary and secondary stages, which they could not understand. This fact has been reported by Azizur Rahman Mullick, the first Bangladesh Ambassador to India, in his Ph.D. thesis: *British Educational Policy for the Muslims of Bengal.* spoken even after independence by the local populace. Bengali had replaced Urdu much earlier in areas to the west of the river Brahmaputra due to Hindu majority influence. But even there (as in Bogra and Murshidabad) it con- tinued to be the language of the Muslim upper class, whatever was left of it, such as the family of Mohammad Ali of Bogra, the Prime Minister of Pakistan from 1953 to 1956.

With the creation of the new Bengali language by the Hindu professors of the Fort William College, began the era of what later on came to be known as Bengali nationalism. But, this nationalism was restricted to the Hindus only and they themselves excluded the Muslims from its scope. Until the time of indepen-

dence, a "Bengali" meant a Hindu of Bengal and *not* a Muslim. The Muslims were contemptuously given the name of "*Bangal*" by the Hindus and they were treated as backward and boorish the hewers-of-wood and drawers-of-water—a position to which they had been reduced by the steam-roller of nearly two centuries of British-Hindu rule, scaled down to this state through a scientific and purposeful activity.

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and his colleagues wrote profusely and sought to elevate their own religion which had till then been nothing more than an accumlation of legends and primitive ideas. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was so influenced by Christianity that he set up a new sect of Hinduism based on an adaptation close to the religion of the rulers. Bankim Chandra Chatterji and Sarat Chandra Chattopadhya later on, wrote fiction which portrayed Muslims as interlopers in the land of the Hindus, *melechs,* a step below the level of the *shudras.* Certainly they could never have thought to be of one nation with these despised people. It was, of course, due to the power and triumph which went to their heads and was achieved through the help of the British imperialists.

The cultural subjugation of the Muslims had been preceded by their economic collapse. We have seen how their properties had been transferred to the Hindus as their jobs in the administration and Government. They would have held a bit to their will-being if the industrial potential which was theirs had been allowed to remain. Unfortunately, however, the industrial rovolution had been taking place in Europe in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The power-spindle

had been invented and Lancashire had been the venue of the new spinning industry in England. The cloth industry of Bengal posed a great threat to it, as it was able to produce high quality cloth made from its own yarn which was still cheaper than the cloth woven at home inspite of the saving of labour by the mechanised spinner. The rulers of the East India Company first made it compulsory for the production of cloth in Bengal with yarn imported from Britain. When even this could not succeed and the quality of weaving in Bengal was so good that its demand persisted in England (from where it was exported to Europe), the Company took a cruel action against the special weavers of muslin in Dacca. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, in a note appended to the report of the Indian Industrial Commission of 1928, has shown how the thumbs of a number of weavers were cut-off so that they could not weave by hand such a fine cloth that it could compete with ease all the other fabrics in the markets of Europe, both locally manufactured or imported.

During a period of forty years, extending from 1760 to 1830 the spinning and the weaving industry of the province was killed, and with it disappeared the production of cotton in Bengal. This threw thousands of Muslims out of their jobs. There was no alternative employment for them, and they were thoroughly impoverished. Among other cash crops grown were indigo, tobacco, sugar-cane etc., which were not so much in demand, excepting in the case of the first-named. This was, at a later date, also destroyed due to the invention of synthetic colouring material in

Germany. Indigo gave place gradually to the cultivation of jute when a demand for it grew with mechanical spinners being set up in Dundee. This new material was taken away at very cheap prices and exported to England via Calcutta. Later, by the end of the nineteenth century, Scotsmen established jute manufacturing factories in the vicinity of Calcutta, to be followed in the enterprise by Hindu Marwari businessmen. By 1947, out of 109 such jute mills near about Calcutta only 2 belonged to Muslims, and there was not a single one in the area of East Bengal, where 70 per cent of the raw jute was cultivated, all by Muslim farmers.

The period of economic and cultural subjugation extended from 1763 to around 1840, when the Muslims touched the bottom of their sad plight. Between 1763 and 1800, the new Hindu element was introduced as owners of land, the tax-payers to the Company Government, charging at will from the Muslim farmers, and nearly all the land belonging to the Muslims, including *al-khirajdar* endowmets, was resumed, while the Muslims were suppressed with a heavy hand. Between 1790 and 1820, the Muslim industry was wholly destroyed and production of cotton fabrics and cotton itself stopped, seriously affecting the employment of Muslims and reducing their earning potential to the minimum.

More and more Hindus ware employed by the Company in their administrative set-up and the number of Muslims progressively reduced, only the judicial system continuing to provide them with some jobs. Even this was finished off in 1835 when Persian was abolished as Court language and English introduced in its place.

From 1801 onwards, Muslim educational institutions were forced to close down because of a lack of financial backing, the *la-khirajdar* lands and endowments having been resumed, and further avenues of education for them were closed with the development of a new Bengali language alien to their genius, which was made to be the language of the schools and of printed text-books, the medium of instruction. As opposed to this, the Hindus had ample opportuinty to learn at the Fort William College and the Presidency College built for them at Calcutta, in which the number of Muslim alumni was nil. The Calcutta Madrassah setup as an eye-wash for the Muslims remained an undeveloped institution for lack of interest though the blame far that is also thrown on Muslims.

The tyranny of the Hindu zemindars continued on the Muslims throughout this period. Whole villages were often burnt and people beaten-up on the slightest of pretexts, their women kidnapped and raped by landlords and their playboy sons, most of the produce of the land taken away as rent without any questions being asked, new and numerous occasions invented to tax the cultivators, impose charges on them, and even an imposition laid on beards. The occasions for the letting loose of repressive measures included such false charges on Muslim communities as sacrificing the cow, using water-pumps or wells generally installed for the benefit of the caste Hindus or for non-payment of the interest on loans from the Sahas or money-lenders.

An indication of the progressive deterioration of the economic condition of the Muslims can be had from accounts given by some British travellers to the

area at the time. One of them, Bishop Heber, who was in East Bengal around 1818, stated that Dacca which had a population of about two lakh around 1800, was reduced to a town of only about 80,000 by 1820 and went down even further during the next decade. Former Muslim noblemen, stated the Bishop, lived in old palaces like owls as the buildings were decaying and collapsing for lack of maintenance, and the absence of servants which must have been a usual part of their use was particularly marked.

Dacca began growing again after 1840. But this time its make-up was different. Lawyers, doctors, teachers, administrators, judges and shopkeepers who began flocking into the former capital of the Mughal Subedari of Bengal, were all Hindu. The only Muslims were petty artisans, *ghora-garry-wallahs*, and the servants of the Nawab of Dacca who rose to this position from being a merchant in carpets.

The same was the situation in all the towns of East Bengal. All of them were dominated by the Hindus, and Muslims formed a minority in each one of them. Schools, colleges and other institutions were setup with Hindu money and endowments and had all their alumni drawn from that community. There were no Muslims worth the name to study in these institutions right upto the third decade of the twentieth century.

In early nineteenth century, Muslims began re-asserting themselves against the steam-roller which was perpetrating their decline. They had already reached a stage when this process could not have been as power-ful as they would have wished it to be. Everywhere was the unfortunate and unhappy picture of the

Muslims compromising with their situation as the third-rate citizens of the land they had made their own for seven centuries and where they had ruled for most of the period. Caste Hindu juggernaut had entered the land from the west and installed itself over them with the maximum display of oppression and tyranny, helped by British arms and British laws. It was to find such a state of affairs that one Haji Shariatullah returned from a stay at Mecca of several years and a study of Islamic theology there, even while the austere Amir Abdul Wahab was introducing his reforms in the home of Islam. Haji Shariatullah found that his people were easily surrendering themselves to the evil influences of an alien culture as a cost of mere survival. He was galled at these conditions and sought to set them right. He began what is known to history as the Faraizi movement, which tried to persuade the Muslims to revert to the basic tenets of Islam in practice as a sure way of making them strong enough to resist the alien onslaught. The movement caught the imagination of the people and was very popular with the Muslims in the eastern and southern districts. But, forthwith it came face to face with the Hindu oppressors who joined hands with their British partners in putting the movement down.

Haji Shariatullah had fully realized the dangers of making his organisation a militant one ; so he resorted to legal and constitutional methods. These, however, were bound to fail. The Faraizi movement continued to be a popular and strong movement for nearly a century, the work of Haji Shariatullah being carried on by his son, Dudu Mian. It tried to resist the imposition

of such taxes as on the beard levied by the Hindu landlords, to assert the right of the Muslims to observe the rites and observance of Islam without let or hindrance. There were quite a number of confrontations with the Hindu landlords, their henchmen and forces and in many cases the leaders of the movement were falsely implicated in criminal cases. The battles were fought sometimes in the villages and sometimes in the courts of law. There was, however, very little of actual physical advantage gained. Most of the benefit was ideological and it saved Muslims from being completely submerged by the idol-worshipping forces. It stopped many of the Muslim communities from adopting Hindu ways of living and even from the worship of the goddess Kali which had been seriously propagated amongst them.

Just about the same time, another movement was begun farther to the west, in the districts of Jessore, Faridpur, Kushtia and the 24-Parganas (vicinity of Calcutta), led by one Haji Nisar Ali, known more commonly to history by his pseudonym of Titu Mir. This movement had its links with that of Syed Ahmad Barelvi and Shah Ismail Shaheed and it was more militant than the Faraizis. Titu Mir organised the Muslims to resist the tyranny of the Hindu zemindars, and raised up bodies of men to fight the *lathials* of the landlords. This resulted in the landlords organising themselves against Titu Mir's forces. But, in several battles that ensued, the mercenary forces of the Hindu zemindars were defeated ignominiously by the bands of the Muslims who were fighting for their very survival. This spread a great deal of alarm amongst them, especially when Titu Mir began building a *bamboo fort*

to give one final and crushing blow to the enemy. They hastily proceeded to Calcutta and appealed to the British authorities to come to their rescue, which the latter did.

The English forces sent for the purpose approached the bamboo fortress and the commander called forth Titu Mir for a conference, to which the latter went with the confidence that he would be able to persuade him to withdraw as the fight was not with the British at all but with the Hindu zemindars. But, the Muslim leader was treacherously assassinated in the British commander's camp and simultaneously the imperialist guns opened up on the fortress which crumpled before the onslaught and most of the Muslims assembled to fight the Brahmins and the Bania were massacred. The zemindars celebrated this heroic defeat with more powerful blows against the Muslims over whom they had triumphed through the borrowed power of the alien imperialists.

Looking to-day with the hindsight of history, the British-Hindu collusion seems natural enough as the British were as much concerned with the complete destruction of Muslim resistance as were the Hindus. But it provides an insight into the success of the British propaganda machine which had been asserting that the imperialists had come to establish justice and peace among the masses, which misled the Muslims to believe that in a fight with the Hindu landlords they would not join the scrap on the side of the latter. This bogey of the British aims in the colonial field was kept alive till the last and to this end were adopted all the means of public dissemination, including education. It was this

make-believe propaganda which eventually persuaded the two communities of the Hindus and Muslims—basically alien to each other and their interests overlapping—into believing that they were one nation, a falsehood proved to be so by history itself of the period right upto 1857 and the first war of independence.

Titu Mir had been liquidated near the end of the third decade of the nineteenth century, and by then the sting had been taken out of the movement of Haji Shariatullah, and the way was clear for the complete suppression of the East Bengal Muslims.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, East Bengal became the happy hunting ground for the economic exploiting classes of the Hindus and the British. From Bombay Presidency, the commercial class of the Marwaris proceeded to Calcutta and engaged itself in business, joining the British in exploiting the productivity of the region for profits and digging itself deep with its vested interests. Jute had replaced indigo in taking the first place in the cash crops of the region. The Marwaris became the chief purchasing element in the area for the fibre, and exporting it to Dundee through Calcutta or selling it to the British, making Clive Street and Harrison Road their chief centres humming with business activity. Bengali Hindus remained primarily feudal in their aspect, a land-owning class which exploited the agrarian system to their best advantage. They took a reluctant part in trading and commercial activity, joining only in real-estate, transportation and shipping mostly. They tried during the last quarter of the century to give competition to the British in inland

river navigation which extended through East Bengal to Assam to meet the requirements of the extensive tea plantation in that area, but did not succeed very much. Rabindranath Tagore and his family—belonging to the most rabid of the Hindu exploiters of the Muslims in the Jessore area—tried their initiative in setting up inland shipping lines on the Assam routes.

It was with the turn of the twentieth century that the Muslims once again began to consider the question of asserting themselves in the political field. Till now they had been isolated from the trends in the rest of the sub-continent as their situation was at such a low ebb that it was unable to produce a strong enough leadership to join the field.

The British had begun to appreciate that the Bengali Hindus, whom they had set up to a better political and economic plight, had begun to have ideas against them now that more than a century had elapsed since the new dispensation had been introduced. In Bengal they had become all powerful, had partaken of of advanced education under the British umbrella, distinguished themselves in several fields, and were now ready to cock a snook at the hand that had fed them. The British hit upon a plan to weaken the Hindus and to show them who was the master. This plan was to carve out a new province out of the unwieldy one of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa (which was one provincial unit at the time) and Assam. under the plan Muslims would have a slight edge over the Hindus, in the new province to be called "East Bengal and Assam", leaving West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa together in which also the Bengali-speaking Hindus would have

been in a minority.

That this plan came from the British is evident from the fact that the move to gather support for it, headed by the Nawab of Dacca, commenced when the plan had been pretty far advanced on the Government files. The Muslims, however, found in it much for their benefit, slight release from the pressures of Hindu aggressiveness and were ready to go along with it—rather hoped for better opportunities in it for their future. But, as soon as the plan was made public and steps taken to implement it, not only Hindu Bengal but the rest of Hindu India was thrown into the midst of an unprecedented furore, the Indian National Congress adopting it as a measure directed against the freshly acquired national aspect of India's phantom unity.

As a counter-action to the anti-East Bengal movement which had gained an all-India stature, the Muslims also got together and in 1906 the All India Muslim League was set up in Dacca. For the first time in seven hundered years (excepting the Mughal period) the affairs of Muslim Bengal were joined in the stream of all-India politics. The need for a common platform was much more severely brought home when the British Government ignominiously surrendered to the Hindu agitation in 1911 and the partition of Bengal was undone. There was no change of heart on the part of the British so far as the Muslims were concerned ; it was merely a strategic move which did not click. Muslims were as much alone as they ever were and had to get together to find their own solution of their political problems by struggling against

the dual enemy, the Hindus and the British. The Hindu juggernaut continued to oppress them however, all along and the constitutional progress in the country did little to advance the lot of the Bengali Muslim. A system of weightages gave the Hindus a greater edge in the legislatures than they were justified to hold, and the Muslim majority was whittled down to be of little use. Lack of education, economic weakness and social pressures continued to work against them and short-circuit any progress which could have been in their favour. A lot of leeway had to be made ; it took a long time for the legalized measures of tyranny to be thrown out of the Statute Book and the Muslims advanced at such a low rate that by the time the climax came, they were still very far behind.

Immediately after the First World War, the Muslims clamoured for a University of their own at Dacca, and one was given to them. But, this helped little as it immediately passed on under the influence of the Hindus, few Muslims being able to take advantage of it due to poverty and still fewer could be on its roll as teachers and administrators. The vast majority of the private colleges and schools continued to be run by the Hindus as they were endowed by their individual munificence, and while education spread by leaps and bounds amongst the Hindus, the Muslims remained far behind. It was only in the late 1930's that some colleges and schools were opened for the Muslims, through the efforts of such politicians as A.K. Fazlul Haq, Khawaja Nazimuddin and Fazlur Rahman. They were, however, inimitable samples of Muslim poverty and backwardness, housed, in bamboo bashas, with poor teach-

ing staff and no hostels.

The Muslims were quite conscious of the tyranny of the Bengali language, which had been created at the turn of the nineteenth century with the collusion of the British and the Hindus. But they could not do much about it for two reasons. Firstly, most of the educated class were only versed in the "modern Bengali" which they learnt in the Hindu dominated institutions. Secondly there were no prospects of their developing their own language due to lack of printing facilities as a result of their poverty. Muslim Bengali, a creation of the perversion of Urdu and Persian due to the influence of Hindu Bengali, remained the spoken language of the villages, but not of literature and polish, since the Hindus predominated the cities and towns of Bengal. It was, however, the famous Qazi Nazrul Islam who raised the banner of revolt against the oppression of the Hindu Bengali.

Himself son of a migrant from Bihar, the Qazi had further acquired a taste for the Islamic culture—including Arabic and Persian—during his stay as a British soldier during the First World War in Iraq. This made him realize that there was nothing for the Muslims of Bengal to feel a sense of inferiority in the use of Persian and Arabic words in profusion in their own language, as these were languages used and spoken in vast areas of the Islamic world. It was in the early 1920's that he burst into his inimitable poetry in *Muslim Bengali* adopting the appealing *rajzia* style. He thereby began a movement which tried to assert Muslim Bengali as a sound and recognizable language.

Nazrul Islam was, however, neutralized soon

enough by Hindu intrigue. They doubtless extolled the virtues of his grand poetry, but pushing him farther and farther into the society of Hindus, especially of women, they diverted him gradually to the realm of "modern Bengali". Later, however, he was poisoned and as a result of it his brain was attacked by paralysis and thereby destroyed for ever. Before this happened, however, Nazrul Islam had married a Hindu girl and the threat which his moving poetry could have posed to the Bengali social domination, had been contained.

The movement which Qazi Nazrul Islam had initiated, was taken up by others and containued. In 1935, Maulana Muhammad Akram Khan started the *Muhammadi*, a journal which adopted the Muslim Bengali as its vehicle. Later on the *Daily Azad* was set up in the same language. These journals promoted the growth of a number of writers and poets in the language who could have a press for their compositions. In East Bengal, a movement was initiated which demanded the writing of the Muslim Bengali in the Arabic script. It was called as the *Tahrik-e-Huruful Quran*.

This movement containued till 1947 and with independence it was taken for granted that the new language would at last find a home for itself. It, however, did not. The reasons for this will be discussed in a subsequent chapter, as this formed a part of East Pakistan's overall subversion.

From the above analysis of the historical facts, it would be apparent that the Mnslims were always basically different from the Hindus of Bengal and at cross-purposes with them. The Hindus, on the other hand, could be said to be a "Bengali" community as a part

and parcel of the overall Hindu society of the sub-continent, to which the Muslims never belonged. This vague and uncertain Bengali community belonged to the area outside what was later to be East Pakistan and to which only Hindus could be said to belong. The word "Babu" was used exclusively for the Hindus, probably as reminiscent of the word "*Abu-e-Bengal*" (quoted by Ziauddin Barani), and Muslims were saddled with that appellation. Even the Government Gazette during the British days used "Babu" with Hindu names while Muslims were invariably given the title of "Maulvi", however misleading.

When in 1905 the Hindus claimed that the British in dividing the province of Bengal aimed at cutting the Bengali nationality in twain, Muslims vehemently denied that they ever belonged to it. Sir George Birdwood, in a latter to *The Times*, London, dated August 17, 1905, stated that the Muslims "point out that the word 'Bengal' had no difinite historical or geographical meaning before it was adopted by the British as a designation for a large administrative unit. The partition still kept 'Anga-Banga' together and segregatedfrom the transgangetic divisions of Bengal".

CHAPTER 4

Weak Under-Belly

It has now been established beyond any doubt that the Hindus and Britain had agreed to concede Pakistan because they believed that the new country would not be able to withstand the weight of the difficulties that were being created for it and what was considered by so-called "experts" its economic non-viability.

Firstly, "mutilated, moth-eaten Pakistan" which had been agreed to was expected to be much weaker than the one demanded. Secondly, pre-conceived, unjust and political Border Award was given under the name of a juridical dispensation by a British legal expert, Sir Cyril Radcliffe, which the Quaid-e-Azam described—and rightly so—as the "parting kick of the British". This Award took away the Muslim majority districts of Malda, Murshidabad and Cooch Behar away from East Pakistan to provide a corridor to India for Assam. As if to recompense this, Khulna, with its big population of Hindus was given to Pakistan. The addition of Assam also opened the way for the accession of Muslim majority state of Tripura to India. East

Pakistan thus turned out to be the "weak under-belly" of Pakistan. It was separated by more than 1,200 miles from West Pakistan, it was practically surrounded on three sides by India (on the fourth there was the sea), had a three thousand mile land border, and a substantial Hindu minority. By 1971 when the subversion of East Pakistan was complete, it would be seen that all these factors proved of utmost importance in Indian military strategy against it.

The Radcliffe Award provided a veritable Pandora's Box for West Pakistan, handing over as it did the Muslim majority district of Gurdaspur to India, thus providing a way into Kashmir, cutting away the Sulemanki headworks on the Sutlej from Pakistan, handing over to India a means of controlling the water of the river on which depended the rich produce of cotton and wheat in the Bahawalpur division. That all this was according to a preconceived plan was soon proved. India forthwith proceeded to utilise these factors to its immediate advantage. It accepted the illegal accession of Kashmir, stopped the supply of water to West Pakistan which threatened to turn a large area into desert. All these troubles for Pakistan emanated from the Radcliffe Award. It assured the isolation of the Eastern Wing from a substantial economic and military assistance from West. Both in West and East Pakistan the Hindus (and Sikhs in the former) had controlled the overwhelming part of the internal trade. They were suddenly withdrawn following terrible bloodshed in the East Punjab which had its repurcussions in West Pakistan. Virulent newspaper propaganda forced the Hindu withdrawal in the East. Simulta-

neously, nearly 12 million Indian Muslim refugees poured into West Pakistan and about a million and a half in East from India.

Pakistan's share of the assets of a united India were not handed over to her, including financial and military ones which were so necessary to start a Central Government from scratch, meet immediate and extraordinary needs, and to carry on from there. While India retained the buildings, installations and paraphernalia of the Central Government in Delhi, Pakistan had to make do in hastily improvised offices in Karachi at the expense of the provincial Government of Sind. Excepting for a few buildings constructed at the time of the first partition of Bengal (1905-11), Dacca had no scope in buildings for the administration and housing of the staff. The city itself was little more than a grown up village, since all the elite in the past had preferred to stay and build in Calcutta.

There is ample proof that there was a complete understanding and collusion between the British representatives in India, headed by Lord Louis Mountbatten and the Congress High Command, in the creation of these difficulties. Mountbatten, according to his own revelations made in 1975, had taken over the Indian administration in his hands from August 18, 1947, onwards, but all actions were in the name of the Indian leaders, including Nehru and Patel. Secret letters from British personnel in high places in Pakistan to the British secret service chief were intercepted and they showed a close link which was not in Pakistan's interests. The British Commander-in-Chief of Pakistan

refused to carry out the orders of the Governor General Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, to send forces into Kashmir, on the plea that he had to consult the Supreme Commander, General Claude Auchinleck. The Supreme Command had been retained only for the purpose of an orderly division of the armed forces and no other, and the explanation of the Pakistani Commander-in-Chief was without logic. The Supreme Commander proposed a conference of the Indian and Pakistani leaders, to which Nehru could not come on the grounds of a political sickness, in order to procrastinate and present the world with a *fait accompli*.

All these steps were taken to smother Pakistan at birth. This, however, did not happen. It upset all the calculations of the Indians and the British. Before however, proceeding to recount the other steps which were taken following this failure, we must proceed to East Pakistan and study the conditions there.

As we have seen in the last chapter, East Bengal had been thoroughly and continuously fleeced of its riches for nearly two centuries in the past. The Muslims had been reduced to the position which was as good, if not worse, as that of the serfs of the Middle Age Europe. The Hindu land-owners and their henchmen shifted all the wealth of the produce of the area to Calcutta. There they built palaces, indulged in pleasures and luxuries or set up industries or commercial houses. Dacca was the only city in the region with a population of more then a hundred thousand, mostly Hindus, especially in the professions and the executive. All the towns of East Bengal had a Hindu majority. Chittagong, the only port with great poten-

tialities, had only three jetties for the export of Assam tea, two salt 'golas' and one oil-mooring, and a total population of 40,000. The poverty of the people proclaimed itself from the face of the towns, though there was no poverty of the region which produced enormous wealth, all carried away to Calcntta. There were eight small cotton mills, four sugar mills and a few edible oil crushing plants—all belonging to Hindus. For the nearly six million bales of jute produced annually, worth about Rs. 300 million, there was not even a single hydraulic baling press in the whole region. In four jute purchasing centres, Narayangunj, Sarisabari, Chandpur and Chaurmugria, all the purchasing was done by Marwaris, the golden fibre obtained loaded on British-owned steamers by Hindu Oriya labour.Muslim producers received throw-away prices for their jute and had to give receipts for amounts much higher than they received. The Marwaris did not do business without cheating on the side. There are bewildering varieties of the jute fibre. The Marwari "experts" knew them all, as they were the ones who had created them. Tbe farmer, illiterate and simple, was always given the price for a much lower quality than he actually deserved. Then the purchaser usually deducted for a hypothetical moisture in the fibre. Thus, just before independence, the Muslim cultivator of jute fibre received a mere Rs. 60 million for the material which earned over Rs. 4,000 million from its sales to the mills or abroad! The number of families amongst which the paltry sixty million was divided were hundreds of times more numerous than those of the purchasers, middlemen, millers and shippers all put together.

This would indicate the exact share of the Muslims of East Pakistan in the colossal jute transactions which took place at the time of independence. Naturally, the money generated by it for the Hindus, also produced a large variety of auxiliary persuits and trades and while it brought enormous prosperity to the latter, East Bengal Muslims continued to grovel in poverty which was reflected in its towns and in the countryside. This can also give a partial picture to the reader of the enormous loss which the establishment of Pakistan brought to Hindu economy and it is obvious that they could hardly swallow it with equanimity.

While many Muslims regretted the loss of Calcutta on the partitioning of Bengal on independence, it was actually a blessing in disguise for them. For, had Calcutta remained within the same political region, its capacities of sucking up the socio-economic life would have kept the area of Eastern Bengal perpetually backward. As it was, Chittagong had to be developed as an alternative to Calcutta port, communication system had to be re-organised to face that port. In the process many other areas prospered. Dacca, as the new capital, developed as the political and economic hub and centre of the new province. At the outset, however, Dacca and Chittagong both presented a dismal picture.

The new East Pakistan government was hastily housed in a College for Girls, with a large number of improvised bamboo sheds added to it for greater accommodation. Similar kutcha houses sprouted to accommodate the families of the Government. A portion of the main Dacca University building was requisition-

ed for setting up a Hospital. The Government House of 1903 was divided between the High Court and the headquarters of the XIV Division of the Army. There being no cash in the treasury, some of the refugee businessmen volunteered to pay off the salaries of the Government servants and for other expenses, until money could be rushed from Karachi. This is how the administration of East Pakistan got going in August 1947.

On partition, East Pakistan received only one member of the former Indian Civil Service who belonged to that region. Six others were hastily promoted from the Provincial Civil Service, while the rest of the administrative ranks had to make do with either migrant civilians belonging to the former I.C.S. or those who belonged to the areas of West Pakistan. The problems which had to be faced were so great and so complex that there was hardly any other way of getting experienced and qualified hands to tackle them. East Pakistanis themselves were so backward in education and experience that they could hardly have been able to meet the requirements of the situation.

The Dacca University, which had originally been established to provide the Muslims of East Bengal with an institution of their own for higher education, had passed into the hands of the Hindus, so much so that more than 90 per cent of the teachers were Hindus, as were the students. There were quite a number of colleges scattered all over East Pakistan, both private and Government, but all of them had a glut of Hindu students and teachers. The Rajshahi College, with a

student population of over 3,000 had only five Muslim students on roll in 1947-48. The situatiou in other colleges was slightly better but not very much so. Soon after the establishment of Pakistan, most of the Hindu students left for India and their place was taken by Muslim students who formerly could not get admissions to these institutions. But, the teachers stayed on. This was not a mere accident, it was by design that they remained at their posts, as we would see later. East Pakistan had no alternative but to welcome their stay as otherwise the institutions would have remained without any teachers. Only a few people qualified to be college teachers had come to East Pakistan on the wave of the migration from India. Most of them had proceeded to Karachi, where they got ready jobs in the institutions of West Pakistan.

As the Hindus left East Pakistan for India, they did as much harm to property as they could. The rolling stock of the Eastern Bengal Railway, formerly Bengal and Assam Railway, with headquarters at Chittagong, was largely affected. They tore up cushions of seats, broke the electrical installations, set fire to many of the coaches and indulged in all kinds of vandalism. East Pakistan had received two second class Railway workshops, at Chittagong and Saidpur, which had to be run at pressure to maintain the proper and timely running of trains. Fortunately, a sufficient number of employees of Indian Railways, with excellent technical experience to man these jobs had opted for Pakistan. They started with a fanatic spirit as part of their enthusiasm for the establishment of Pakistan. Most of the admi-

nistrative and non-technical jobs on the Railway were in the hands of Hindu babus prior to independence. The invitation to opt, however, brought such a large number of personnel from the other Indian railways that there was an excess in certain cadres and several thousand had to be shunted off to West Pakistan where they were promptly discharged from service. In spite of the fact that the rolling stock and track of the Eastern Bengal Railway had been badly mauled during World War II, and then by the outgoing Hindu staff, the opters managed to keep the wheels moving, often living under the sky or in wagons with their families undergoing extreme hardships.

The port of Chittagong being too inadequate to meet the requirements of imports and exports for a population of over 50 million, an arrangement had to be made with Calcutta to act as a transit port for goods meant for East Pakistan. The arrangement was not a happy one—but the only one possible under the circumstances. The Indians promoted uncalled for delays and goods hardly reached their destination in time. This created artificial shortages in the local market, of consumer goods and necessities, and there was the usual rush for the commercial classes to make a pretty penny out of this natural phenomenon of supply and demand. Government had to introduce controls and trading in some essentials could only be done through special permits and licensing. This resulted in the growth of a crop of fast workers, touts and handymen who were always willing to offer their services to any one who wanted them, to obtain these pieces of Government

paper, in exchange of a substantial consideration. Most of these gentlemen were native-born East Pakistanis who had a political approach to the Ministerial chambers and could apply some pressure on the civil servants. The parliamentary system of democracy, then in vogue, offered itself most suitably to the application of such lucrative pressures. In due course, such sordid considerations became the order of the day and legislators and public representatives would either be put in profitable situations or were ready to withdraw support from the party in power. The non-Bengali civil servants, much-maligned by *agents provocateur* later, might have lined their own pockets but did little to help or assist their own kinsmen or others of their choosing, save and except when they got the signals from above.

The Marwaris, as a rule, remained ensconced in the jute trade. It was not possible to get rid of them in a hurry. They had made the jute trade complicated during a long period of monopoly, that it was simply impossible for a newcomer to walk in and start dabbling in it. Fibre produced from the plant generally varied in quality from one piece of land to another. It could be divided into several understandable groups for commercial purposes. Not so, the Marwari preferred to fix hundreds of varieties, each of them valued differently, from Rs. 2 per maund for *habijabi* to betweer Rs 45 and Rs .50 per maund for, say, *Tossa Whit: Firsts*. When buying from the cultivator (invariably a Muslim), it was he who fixed the price and named the quality and brazenly cheated in it by paying for a variety invariably two or three steps lower than what he sold later, and

the farmer was in no position to argue. Besides the bewildering number of vatieties based on the quality of the fibre, the Marwari could adjudge the moisture content by just looking at it and would make an equivalent cut in the quantity, allowing for reduction in weight on drying. His was the last word in this too. But, whatever he did by way of cheating the cultivator, he was an expert, and no one could replace him especially as the varieties, named and organised over a long period, entered into trade all the way from Calctutta to Dundee, the only buyers.

So, the Marwari remained. But, now he setup a chain of purchasing centres all along the 3000 miles border, on the Indian side, to which he smuggled jute which he bought on the East Pakistan side. Pakistan not only was losing foreign exchange (sterling at the time) but also duty. A large amount of Indian currency flowed into the province. This was picked up by the Hindu owners of property which they were disposing of on much higher prices to the new businessmen in that area, for sending on to India. East Pakistan was losing its jute as well as a lot of money through the back-door. It was for this reason that the price of gold was always higher in East Pakistan than in the West.

In the meantime, East Pakistan was being financed on cash brought with them by the migrants on the eve of and just after independence. It was, however, very much limited, as soon enough India became aware of it and imposed restrictions which were stringently implemented through an already trained staff available to it. The drain from East Pakistan, however, continued on the basis of its jute and the province was fur-

ther impoverished.

As we have seen earlier, Calcutta had been built into a mighty metropolis, a veritable city of palaces, on the money from East Bengal. This continued for some time, though the Marwari and the Hindu landlord knew that there was going to be an end to it soon, so he redoubled the speed of this drain. Had it not been for the migrant capital, the province would have collapsed at an early stage. Instead of giving the migrants credit for this, Muslim youth were prodded to condemn them for the job. East Pakistan had begun developing into Pakistan's weak under-belly in every way.

GHAPTER 5

Beginnings of Subversion

There were four distinct sections in Hindu India who were interested in the subversion of East Pakistan:—

(1) The former Hindu aristocracy of East Bengal, deprived of its lands, its right to lord it over the Muslim serfs and to strut about the sub-continent making much of its own superiority as compared to the uncouthness of the '*Bangal*', the word used for the Muslims, a word of contempt.

(2) The Hindu businessman who battened on jute, held a monopoly of internal trade, gave paltry sums to the impoverished Muslim husbandmen on fabulous rates of interest and enjoyed his victims' discomfiture when he attached their few chattels and evicted the families from their puny dwellings, who cheated the poor growers, day in and day out, and spent his loot in building palaces on Harrison Road in Calcutta, keeping mistresses on Sundaria

Patti, gambled on horses* and so on.

(3) The Hindu Congress, whose leadership had conceded Pakistan on the understanding that the infant state would not be able to withstand the shocks of combined Hindu-British treachery and would come to its knees in the shortest possible time and demand a re-union on its knees, which simply did not happen.

(4) The Communist Party of India which had watched the end of their long efforts of subverting vast regions through the organization of the industrial proletariat and, with the partition of the subcontinent, found the industrialised areas being split up from the dominantly agricultural ones.

These were extremely powerful forces arraigned against the part of a state ill-organized, ill-equipped, ill-financed and geographically ill-arranged, with the only capital towards success being its will to survive against tremendous odds. These forces had all the advantage they could possibly have against a weak East Pakistan.

Geographically, the province had a 3000-mile long open border with India, across which any sort of entry could be made : of ideas and doctrines, of subverting trained manpower, of finances for recruiting more of the *agents provocateur*, of smuggling and so on. Along the long border were also planted here and there com-

*The Calcutta Races before independence were third biggest in the British Empire after Derby and Poona, in terms of gross bookmakers turnover.

munities of non-Muslim tribes, unsophisticated and backward who could hardly have any sympathy with the ideological framework of a Muslim nation, the Santhals in Rajashahi, the Garos of Mymensingh, the Khasis of Sylhet and the Chakmas and Mughs of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Inside, there were vast islands of Hindus, who had been unable to migrate to India, living in exclusive rural communities, which could serve as safe hiding places for the agents of subversion from across the border.

The first attack on East Pakistan was by the commercial community of Hindus engaged in internal trade —responsible for the distribution of essential commodities to the surfeit of population—through its withdrawal. One has only to look into the files of the Calcutta newspapers of 1947-48, to understand the nature of this conspiracy. The newspapers persisted in publishing false and concocted tales of Muslim aggressiveness over the Hindus in the newly established East Pakistan. Every episode of normal crime was painted in a communal colour, even though the incidence of crime itself was suprisingly low in an area where the law and order forces were still in the process of reorganising themselves, and administration was still weak.

In 1947 East Pakistan had no newspapers. Prior to that date, East Bengal Muslims were assiduous readers of Calcutta's Daily *Azad*, published by that famous stalwart, Maulana Muhammad Akram Khan and his sons, in the language called "Muslim" Bengali. Before the Maulana could decide what he should do in the changed circumstances, the Indian Government

came down on his head with the imposition of fabulous income-tax demands, insisting on payment before appeal. He had to abandon his printing plant and his house and property and flee to East Pakistan. *The Azad* closed down. The only source of correct and truthful news was thus cut off.

As against the lone *Azad*, in 1947 the Hindus had their *Ananda Bazar Patrika* and the *Jugantar* in Bengali and the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, the *Hindustan Standard*, the *Nationalist*, the *Advance*, and the *Eastern Express* in English as well as others, each of them having large circulations. The Muslims' *Morning News* had also closed down in Calcutta, while the *Star of India* had a very meagre circulation.

There being no bar on their entry into East Pakistan, all day-to-day information was dished out by the Hindu Calcutta newspapers, and East Pakistan could hardly cut off this only source of information and news, through administrative action, if at all the then government was aware of what was the aim of certain type of news, deliberately carried by them. When at last some kind of steps were taken (in late 1948), the mischief had already been done. The publication of certain coloured items published at the very outset had touched off a panic, and an exodus of the Hindus, which swelled through its own momentum. With remarkable suddenness East Pakistan was sucked dry of all the established operators in the mechanism of internal distribution of essential commodities. Had not at that time some of the plucky migrants taken over this job, so-to-say in midstream, there would have been a serious breakdown, depriving millions of their daily

needs and resulting in a popular upsurge against the new order of things. The filling-up of the vacuum, contributed to the failure of the Hindu plan and helped the consolidation of the province.

While many of the trading and aristocratic Hindus of Calcutta watched with bated breath the outcome of their conspiracy only to meet with dismay, the Communists could not sit idle. They knew the game that was being played by the capitalists, and they decided to work out projects according to their own counsels. They organized a three pronged drive :—

(1) The first was aimed at subverting the non-Muslim tribes in the vicinity of the borders.

(2) The second looked forward to the creation of dissatisfaction in the newly set-up and improperly organized Police force of the province, and elsewhere in the administrative set-up.

(3) The objective of the third was to drive a wedge between the original native-born population of East Pakistan and the migrants.

If one considers the colossal part played by the migrant population in the economic survival of the province as well as its administrative organization at this stage, the sinister nature of the last-named communist activity can be appreciated. One of the most important sectors of this activity was the start of the language controversy. "The Urdu-speaking people have come to make this province their colony, and they would succeed if Urdu would be adopted as the only *lingua franca* of Pakistan," was whispered into the ears of raw minds and bewildered intellectuals. "Fight for

Bengali" they were told.

The first two of the communist objectives were short-term. The aim was to destroy whatever law and order had been established through hard and untiring work, and this way contribute to the collapse of this part of the new state. Alternatively one may say that the Communists were trying to see that no proper law and order were established ever.

Students of Communist strategy have particularly remarked the peculiar situation at the time. East Pakistan, with its low standards of intellectualism and its purely agricultural base, could hardly provide any useful manpower to the left. The Communists need a high standard of intelligence to master the much needed indoctrination, even though it was reduced to the most ordinary accumlation of cliches and catchwords. East Pakistan had few intellectuals. The Muslims, who had long suffered under the heel of Hindu feudal tyranny had not needed any Bolshevik movement to rid them of their tormentors, but the successful Pakistan movement had done away with the old order at a stroke, and nothing could be better for them. Many of the pseudo-intellectuals had, of their own accord, taken instinctively to a study of Urdu, since Urdu had figured prominently in the struggle for the achievement of Pakistan against an effort to impose Hindi in supersession to it.

The success of Mao Tse Tung's revolution in China through the use of the agricultural proletariat had not arrived as yet, and the red strategists were still hugging to their breast the researches at the Communist University of Moscow, emanating from the ancient

experiences of Lenin and Stalin, especially the latter, who had, in the late twenties, burnt his fingers with the experiments with the *Kulaks* of the Soviet Union. Communist operations in East Pakistan were, therefore, more of an experimental nature with hazy immediate objectives. The vitiation of law and order was one of the standard moves which was expected to bring in fruits in due time, and this they indulged in. That this could help the capitalist strategy of Indians as well, they had not yet realized. Nor had they turned to make a common cause with the enemy on the ground that both had the same objective. They did that later.

How these attempts fared, we shall now recall. The leadership of the Rajshahi Santhals was in the hands of a young woman, Miss Aruna Sen, that of the Garos in those of Moni Singh, the scion of a former Hindu zamindar family who had spent most of his patrimony in the service of the people. Moni Singh could have been a hero had he not tied his activities with the political perambulations of an idealist. His doing so paved his way easily to a Pakistani jail. The Chittagong Hill Tracts did not have any leader, excepting a Hindu intellectual of Chittagong with a background of the old terrorist movement against the British, Purnendu Dastidar.

The Santhals were ancient Dravidians, whose natural home was the hilly regions of Hazaribagh and Ranchi in Bihar, and a splinter group had moved this far east, probably as labour to the old indigo planters. They were a primitive people, jet black mostly, with both men and women sparsely clad and bare-breasted, still using their bows and arrows as well as ancient

slings to hunt and to defend. They were totally unsophisticated and were unperturbed during the rapid march of political events in the subcontinent. They could follow whatever they were told and could be easily organised. Aruna Sen found an easy enough material in them though she had to live constantly with them and to preach away against a distant Government of which they knew nothing. The whole work amongst them would have gone unnoticed had it not been for a most heinous crime committed at the time.

On a day in 1948 the Santhals were supposed to gather in a large meeting, far in the interior, away from the district headquarters of Rajshahi, to be addressed by Aruna and some of her henchmen. When intelligence of this reached Rajshahi, the Deputy Comissioner—simply as a safety measure imposed Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code, which banned the meeting. A Sub-Inspector of Police and three constables were sent to deliver the order to the organisers of the meeting.

When these four policemen reached the place, the Santhals had already assembled, armed with bows, arrows and slings. There were the four against several thousand. Aruna Sen promptly disarmed them and then proceeded *to have them buried alive.* This unnecessary and uncalled for crime had been committed just to show to the simple Santhals that the new Government's authority could not only be defied but its representatives could be punished as well.

Many days passed before the officials at the district headquasters became anxious as the messengers sent by them had not returned. A posse of Police was sent,

who, after many days of inquiry discovered what had happened. The enforced grave of the hapless policemen was dug up and four skeletons brought out. Some of the Santhals, then, gave a detailed description of what had actually transpired. Aruna Sen was, however, not to be found anywhere, and the Police watched strategic points for her and searched up and down to no effect. After about a month or so, when the hue and cry had all but died down, the Hindu communist Miss was discovered by a Police constable who knew her by face, sitting in the Rajshahi Railway Station's First Class Ladies Waiting Room, a few minutes before the Calcutta bound train was to steam in. She was arrested and taken to the Police Station for questioning. Next day the Calcutta press came out with highly coloured tales of torture and third degree on the person of the murderess, and for days afterwards the papers there were hurling abuse and calumny against the Government and the people of East Pakistan.

Aruna was tried, incontrovertible evidence brought out against her and sentenced to life imprisonment, later confirmed by the High Court.

The matter could be said to have been disposed of and forgotten. But, in 1954, the Jugto Front Government of the late Mr. A.K. Fazlul Haq released her on medical grounds, obtaining a pardon from the Governor. Before she was sent on her way to Calcutta to join her relatives, as the hand-out stated, she was lodged in the Dacca Medical College Hospital for about a month. And, for this whole month she was the cynosure of all youthful attentions. A team of scores of nurses was formed to attend to the communist "heroine", in

relays, and her every wish was fulfilled. While she was being lionised, students were constantly around her and she preached to them the doctrine of hatred, the ways of subversion, as she was not ill at all. Poems were written and circulated freely depicting her as the great martyr for the cause. If nothing else, this clearly indicated the great influence the Communists had on the Jugto Front, which is supposed to have been a construction of the late Husseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts, tucked away in the south-east of East Pakistan, had a population of only 300,000 in an area of 5,000 square miles which gave it the lowest density of population in the Province. Among these three hundred thousand, two major tribes dominated, the Chakmas and the Mughs, predominantly Buddhist by religion. The Mughs were of the Burmese stock, and the Chakma origin is shrouded in historical mystery. Efforts were made at the outset to persuade them to protest against their inclusion in Pakistan. But, apart from a slight ripple at the time of the flag-hoisting on August 14, 1947, at Rangamati there never was any trouble. Their Chief of Chiefs, Raja Tridev Roy, who had only recently ascended the gaddi, was an enlightened person, and he soon found himself in congenial cooperation with the Government.

Efforts to rig up demonstrations against Urdu, especially in Dacca and some of the other towns, began in 1948, failed miserably at the very start. The leader in Dacca was one Nadira Begum, daughter of a Government servant, who soon found herself in trouble. She and some others were only able to organize a demonstration of children and some boys. The efforts in

the University had also not succeeded very well. At this stage, the students as well as the people of East Pakistan were too enthusiastically imbued with positive emotions for Pakistan to be easily carried away by extraneous propaganda. A great deal of spade work was needed, and forthwith the members of the East Pakistan Central Committee of the Communist Party, sitting in Calcutta decided to redouble their efforts in preparing the ground, for which ample scope existed.

In the late sixties, a story had been going the rounds in East Pakistan that Shaikh Mujibur Rahman had demonstrated against the Quaid-e-Azam's declaration in the student meeting at Dacca university that Urdu, and Urdu alone, "shall be the *lingua franca* of Pakistan". The story has no truth in it whatsoever. It had been manufactured out of whole cloth to provide the Shaikh with a prestige which he did not deserve, by his propangandists. One or two students had just whispered amongst themselves and were promptly forced to be quiet by others in the vicinity. Beyond that there was absolutely no voice of protest against the speech of the Father of the Nation. None would have dared at the time. This is a sample of such legendsas are made to grow of leaders, whose veracity is snowed under by a veritable avalanche of corroborations and repetitions, and have absolutely no basis in fact. Mujib was not a very influenital person at the time: he was only a little above being a nonentity. His whole background was as a henchman of Suhrawardy, for making a lot of noise in meetings where the leader wanted such noise to be made. It was later that the Indians and their allies, the communists, picked him up to act as their catspaw.

Communist activity, aiming at the vitiation of law and order situation in the province, had started subversion among the law-enforcing agencies, especially the Police even in 1947. It way natural that at this early stage, living conditions and wage structures could not be in keeping with requirements and needs of the personnel. The whold set-up needed a complete re-organization and re-orientation. But little time had elapsed since independence and there was hardly enough opportunity to look into these matters, as there were a thousand other problems to be tackled first. The Communist agents took advantage of the situation and began secret work among the police personnel, egging them on to go on strike, which they did in 1948.

This was a very serious matter, indeed. On the one hand these agents of disruption were telling a section of the people that the Police represented the strong arm of capitalist authority and symbolized it, persuading people to bury them alive, and on the other telling the Police that they were being used without enough recompense for their efforts. This was a supreme example of the Machiavelism of the communist propaganda machine. Each section looked at things only as they appeared to it in its own restricted sphere. The Government was alive to this dangerous situation. It could not allow the law-enforcing agencies to go on strike and thus end law and order completely. The striking policemen were given an ultimatum to come out of the barracks within a stipulated period, on the expiry of which they were dealt with severely, involving the use of arms. Many of them were killed, the rest surrendered.

The action was carried out with such promptness and speed, however, that the Indian propaganda machine could not get hold of it. Various coloured stories were given the press, but they lost credibility due to their own conflicting nature. It taught the Policemen a lesson which they could not easily forget.

That the situation as it existed was not only fully known to the Government, but the Father of the Nation was also seized of it would be apparent from the following excepts from his speeches made at various places during his visit to East Pakistan in 1948.

The following points were made out by the Quaid-e-Azam in a public speech at Dacca on March 21, 1948 :

> "On the 15th August, the Provincial Government in Dacca was a fugitive in its own home. It was faced with the immediate problem of finding accommodation for thousands of Government personnel in what was, after all, before Partition only a small mofussil town. Hardly had Government got to grips with administrative problems thus created when some seventy thousand Railway and other personnel and their families suddenly arrived in this Province, driven out of India partly by panic owing to the disturbances immediately following the partition. There were further, owing to the departure of Hindu personnel, great gaps left in the administrative machinery and the entire transport and communication system had been disorganised. The immediate task that was faced by Government, therefore, was hurriedly to re-

group its forces and re oganise its administrative machine in order to avert animminent administrative collapse".

Speaking about the activities of disruption being carried out at the time by foreign agents, the Father of the Nation stated in the same public speech :

"But I want to tell you that in our midst there are people financed by foreign agencies who are intent on creating distruption. Their object is to disrupt and sabotage Pakistan. I want you to be on your guard ; I want you to be vigilant and not to be taken in by attractive slogans and catchwords. . ."

About communists and Indian plans and hopes the Quaid was most explicit in the same public speech:

> "Quite frankly and openly I must tell you that you have got amongst you Communists and other agents financed by foreign help and if you are not careful you will be disrupted. The idea that East Bengal should be brought back into the Indian Union is not given up, and it is their aim yet, and I am confident—I am not afraid, but it is better to be vigilant —that those people who still dream of getting back East Bengal into the Indian Union are living in a dreamland."

Most of the Quaid-e-Azam's utterances during his visit to East Pakistan, have contained warning against the activities of these foreign agents, some of them Muslim, in his own words. He was quite clear and unambiguous on these points, and what he had warned against unfortunately came to be true in the long run.

For, he did not live long to have a stable Government in Pakistan which could tackle all the problems at their source. The Governments which came after him and especially after the assassination of Quaid-e-Millat Liaqat Ali Khan, were weak and stop-gap. They carried on with patch-work here and there and compromises were made with agencies inimical to the country for the sake of power, while disruption was thereby provided a new lease of life.

In the meantime, silent work was in progress in the Dacca University and some of the colleges, most particularly the Jagannath College at Dacca. This work was carried on by Hindu lecturers and professors who, surprisingly enough, had not joined the stream of Hindu exodus to India in 1947. There were very few Muslim teachers at the time of independence. Dacca University had 90 per cent of its lecturers and professors who were Hindu, very few of whom left for India. They, however, transferred their families to that country and lived alone. This, apparantly, was done according to a pre-arranged plan.

Most of the professors of the University had a record of scholarship and wielded great prestige amongst the students. They applied themselves subtly to point out to the students the (i) unnaturalness of the division of the subcontinent, (ii) the impossibility of the new Pakistan State to be ever economically viable, and, last but not least, (iii) the objective of the non-Bengalis to turn East Pakistan over into a colony of their own. This last point could be supported with examples from real life. It was quite true that much of the administration was manned by non-Bengalis, a

good deal of the trade was in their hands and they were working away as Pakistani fanatics in all other branches of civic activity.

There was, however, no one to tell the students that this was primarily because two hundred years of grinding tyranny of the Hindus had not allowed the Muslims of the region from gaining sufficient capacity to man those pursuits which independence now demanded. They only saw the confirmation of what they were told, backed with the prestige of able scholars and good teachers. It got ingrained in their minds that this was nothing but the truth and now sense of dissatisfaction began to germinate in their minds, to bear fruits later.

The truth of this assertion can be checked from the files of the Dacca *Morning News* of 1950-54. *The Morning News* had closed down in Calcutta in 1947, and the partnership of Khwaja Nuruddin and Abdur Rahman Siddiqi dissolved. While Siddiqi stayed back in Calcutta, Khwaja Nuruddin (brother-in-law of Khwaja Nazimuddin) moved to Dacca, where he re-started the newspaper, first as a weekly in 1949, and then as a daily in 1950, under the Editorship of Syed Mohsin Ali. The author of this work joined the paper in 1951 (remaining with it till 1955). It was not once but repeatedly that the Government was warned of the activities of these Hindu teachers and professors, in trying to wean the students away from the Pakistan ideology. It was rather late in the day, for a lot of work had already been accomplished and a host of students had left the campus with seeds of disaffection deeply ingrained in their minds. Many of them had

been joining the administration, ready to drag into it more of their own way of thinking later. They were, however, still very junior and could hardly exercise a widespread influence on the Government policies at the time.

The most important influence, apart from that on the alumni of the Dacca University, of the Hindu members of the teaching staff, was on some of their Muslim colleagues. Universities are usually governed by certain administrative rules by virtue of which teaching careers are controlled by senior members of the staff working in a sort of Academic Council. Whether it was due to pressures applied through this body or through other channels, some literary figures were thrown up by the University who undertook to sponsor the promotion of the Bengali language in East Pakistan. But, as one would have presumed, it was not the language of the Muslims which was promoted, the language for which the *Daily Azad* and many other stalwarts had fought for nearly half a century and which should have logically found a fair home in East Pakistan, but the language which had been christened "modern Bengali", the language which was created and nourished by Hindu Brahmins at the turn of the 19th century at the Fort William College at Calcutta, helped by the British and the introduction of the Printing Press in the Bengal of the time. A period was put on the long struggle for the recognition of the Muslim Bengali as a proper language, surprisingly enough in East Pakistan which was a natural haven for it.

The Bengali Academy was set up and very quietly it went to work doing this job. Some of the champ-

ions of the Muslim Bengali were much too busy in other jobs to take notice of it—until it was too late. Poet Benazir Ahmad was trying to run a business; Taleem Hussain was in the Pakistan Information Department; Farrukh Ahmad worked for Radio Pakistan, Habibullah Bahar was Health Minister in the province until he was attacked by melancholia and similarly others who had established a name in poetry and prose of the Muslim Bengali, were nowhere in the picture. By the time they were aware what was up, a strong group had been born in the University which scoffed at the language used by these poets and writers. They had been reduced to a minority and the only way for them was either to acquiesce in the new trends or die a natural death in literature.

The institution of this "modern" or Hindu Bengali, in the place of Muslim Bengali, had very far-reaching effects. If Muslim Begali had been developed from the outset, the languages of East Pakistan and West Bengal, would have been different and the literature of each also at variance with the other. As it was, the language of West Bengal also became that of East Pakistan, and soon enough books written in West Bengal were flooding the markets of East Pakistan. Here a word is necessary about the printing and publishing industry of East Pakistan.

On indepence, there was no publishing industry in East Pakistan; there were no modern printing plants anywhere. The Government paid scant attention to it. Even the school text-books were printed in Calcutta and smuggled into East Pakistan till as late as 1960. As a result, therefore, there was no "Bengali literature"

in East Pakistan at the time of independence and till the late fifties when a little of it began finding a limited press.

An interesting dialogue which took place between the author and some native East Pakistani young men in 1953 was something of this sort :—

Q. What exactly do you want in the matter of language?

A. We want Bengali as one of the state languages of Pakistan.

Q. Which Bengali?

A. What do you mean?

Q. I mean that different districts of East Pakistan have all a different dialect, especially Sylhet and Chittagong, where the dialect spoken is so different from the rest of East Pakistan that they may be termed even separate languages. Which one of them would you wish to be one of the state languages of Pakistan?

A. None of them, of course. The state language we want is the Bengali of books.

Q. Have you got a book with you?

A. Yes, here it is.

Q. This book, as you can see, has been written by a Hindu of West Bengal, and it has been published in Calcutta by a Hindu publisher. This is not your literature. Where is yours?

A. We shall build it. At the moment there is none, it is true. But, by the by, it shall be born.

Q. So, in other words, you want a language to

be a *lingua franca* of Pakistan which has no literature of its own. Isn't that it?

A. If you put it that way, yes.

Q. So, you are quarrelling over the future of a child yet unborn. Is it not rather ridiculous?

A. It looks like that, the way you put it. But, ..."

So, this was the reality. Students had been told by their teachers in the colleges and schools and the Dacca University that if they allow a little ground in the matter of language, the Urdu speaking non-Bengali would usurp their rights straight away and rule over East Pakistan as a colony. So much emotion had been let loose by this logic that the budding youth of the time could not see the wood for the trees. Later on, as "modern" or Hindu Bengali became the language of the scholars and students, the flood-gates were opened. Hundreds of thousand of books, produced in Calcutta with two hundred years of printing experience behind, poured into East Pakistan unhampered, voraciously devoured by the students and youth of East Pakistan. Most of the books were written by Hindus with an eye on propaganda. It would not be out of place to mention that the word "Bangladesh" was first used by Bimal Mitra in his novels published sometime in the early fifties, and he was one of the most popular novelists with the youth of East Pakistan.

We have gone a little ahead in our description of the lines of subversion. The main fact we wished to make was that by a trick of circumstances so created by certain Muslims of East Pakistan themselves, East Bengal's movement for the recognition of Muslim

Bengali as a language and not merely as a dialect of rural Bengal, was given a short shrift *after independence.* Muslim Bengali was forgotten. Modern Bengali took its place: the Bengali of West Bengal, with most dangerous results. The architects of this were few in number. The names of Dr. Shahidullah and Dr. Wahidul Haq stand our prominently. They were, however, the front only to push things through. The real backers of the movement were the Hindu teachers and professors, such as Professor Aiyer, Dr. Dev, Ajit Guha and many others.

Dacca Uuiversity published in 1948-49 the second volume of Sir Jadunath Sarkar's "History of Bengal, the Muslim Period". This man, who is a slur on the scholarship of history, openly prostituted his position to a perversion of historica' facts to the detriment of the Muslims and for the British domination of the sub-continent in exchange of which he got a much-deserved knighthood. He has, with deliberate intention misrecorded the character of Sirajuddowla, painting him as a coward and a wastrel, and even eulogising the assasin of the last of Murshidabad's Muslim rulers. This is just one example of what the bastard product of a prejudiced imagination put forward, is full of such concoctions, misrepresentations and perversions of facts. But the strange thing is that such a work was produced in a Muslim state and under the aegis of a University of the Muslims! This publication shows the great influence the Hindu members of the teaching staff of the Dacca University had on the academic and other policies of the institution.

In 1951 there was held in Dacca the All Pakistan

Historical Congress. One of the sessions was presided over by that great and honest historian of the subcontinent, Maulana Syed Sulaiman Nadvi. The students of the University, who formed the greater part of the participants, not only disturbed the session with demonstrations against the Maulana but after the break up of the meeting attacked his august person as well. This was done only because the scholar traced the history of Hindu tyranny on the Mulims of East Bengal and proved how the Bengali language with its Sanskritic overtones had shackled the feet of the Muslims for two centuries, forcing their identification with an ideology which was predominantly Hindu though in other ways they were culturally Muslim. This demontration was inspired and organised by the Hindu teachers of the University. It transgressed all levels of decency and clearly showed the way the wind was blowing.

By 1951, the University's Hindu professors had done that work for which they had stayed behind. In the first place, they had sent out from the institution a large set of Muslim young men of East Pakistan, equipped with degrees and certificaties but steeped in the hatred of non-Bengalis and West Pakistan and convinced that the latter wished to establish a kind of colonial rule in the province over the native-born. This set was now to man senior Government posts and eventually be responsible for the administration of the province and otherwise act as the brain trust of East Pakistan. In the second place, they had been instrumental in putting to death the movement for Muslim Bengali in East Pakistan and successfully re-established the domi-

nation of "modern" Bengali which was the same language as that of West Bengal. Through this they had established a common denominator between the two "Bengals": one in Pakistan and the other in India, and provided the means for swamping East Pakistan with the propaganda which overwhelmed the intelligentsia as soon as the flood-gates for the entry of West Bengal literature were opened. Thirdly, they had been able to set-up the underground organisation of the Communists, which was to play its part in subversion to the fullest extent.

With the help of some people in the administration, quite a number of young men, both from the University as well as outside, were sent for training in subversion to India. Some of them went to the "camp" of M. N. Roy at Dehraun, where the latter had established his centre for the initiation, conversion and training in subversion as well as indoctrination. Others took their training elsewhere. The author himself knew some of these trainees and can cite their names as well, but would not do so for obvious reasons. This course was taken very secretly and no one was the wiser.

The objectives of the Communists and the capitalist vested interests of India, being the same —subversion of East Pakistan with a view to achieve the dissolution of the partition of Bengal—somewhere along the line they had made a common cause and joined hands with each other. Politics, it may be said, makes strange bed-fellows. But, Communist strategy positively owns infiltration and cooperation with inimical groups as a part of its *modus operandi.* Here,

the Left had its profound know-how, scope for training and operational efficiency, while the Indian right had as much money and to spare as was needed, and *a marriage de convenience* of the two produced a gigantic power of evil in East Pakistan.

A word is necessary at this stage about the ideological indoctrination of one of the most mysterious and colourful figures of Pakistan politics, who dominated the stage for nearly thirty years Maulana Abdul Hameed Khan Bhashani.

The use of the appellation of "Maulana" with his name is actually a misnomer. He was as much a "Maulana" in the real sense of the word as was "Maulana" Hasrat Mohani, minus the latter's Aligarh education, extensive reading of his own and devotion to poetry and literature. Bhashani was neither a learned man in the modern sense nor in any aspect of the Quran, Hadith or *fiqh*. He was just a half-baked professional Maulvi, whom circumstances had launched into the political arena. In Assam, back in the early part of this century, a large number of Muslims from East Bengal were given a chance to migrate and take to cultivation by clearing deep forest lands. Abdul Hameed Khan was cast on the forest lands on the crest of one such population movements. In the course of time he became a Mulla, gained confidence of his people and became their conscience keeper.

When in the forties, Pakistan's struggle was reaching a decisive phase, the Congress Government of Bardoloi felt alarmed that presence of so many Muslims of East Bengal in the Assam Valley might not eventually tilt the scale in favour of Assam's inclusion in the

new Mulim state. Already a law had been passed in the early period of Congress hegemony in the province (1937-39) making the presence of these Muslims unlawful, known by the name of the Line System. Bardoloi decided to implement the law, and the settlers were to be evicted forcibly from their villages, their homesteads destroyed with the use of elephants. Maulana Abdul Hameed Khan rose to prominence in his defiance of the inequitable law. He so organised the people as to be ready for the eviction and as soon as the agents of the Government went away after dismantling homesteads, they were promptly re-built or re-set-up. Bamboo bashas are easy to make, the raw material being plenty in Assam forest lands, and to hand. Abdul Hameed Khan made the best use of this remarkable fact. He was quite successful in his movement, though he was repeatedly arrested and sent to jail also, to be set free soon after.

After independence, the "Maulana" stayed on in India for some time, until it became too hot for him there. Later, he returned to his own ancestral home in the district of Mymensingh. His success in Assam had gone to his head and defiance of authority became a second nature of his, which helped inflate his ego. And, without thinking much of what he was doing by creating trouble for an infant state, he began subverting authority in East Pakistan as well, and was promptly sent to jail.

By this time, the East Pakistan Government had their fill of the Communist machinations in the province and many who had indulged in unlawful activities from amongst them had also been sent to jail. Abdul

Hameed Khan who had by now added "Bhashani" to his name for reasons best known to himself, came into contact wish the communists in the prison he went to.

As we have remarked before, East Pakistan was too short of indoctrinated Communist personnel, and the prisons were being used as the training grounds of as many as could be enrolled to the cause. It must be said to the credit of the Maulana that though he was hardly much versed in the Islamic Law, he had a very soft corner for his religion. He had, however, not a very absorbant mind and little knowledge of the world at the time. He was an easy victim to the tantrums of the Communist recruitment agents inside the jail. The communists deem the jails a very good training ground for revolutionaries. "The jail", they tell their initiates, "is a miniature of the capitalist world." The prisoners represent the working class, the masses. The jail administration, the warders and so on, represent the capitalist stranglehold on the masses. The enormous power wielded by the jailers vis-a-vis the prisoner is comparable to the capitalist power which circumscribes the working class and which has to be overthrown through the measly weapons at their command, through the united will and inherent strength of the prisoners. So, the merry activity starts. There are individual hunger-strikes, collective hunger-strikes, defiance of rules, demands and more demands and occasional attacks on the person of the warders and officials. Extreme secrecy be comes a part of the operations, with real punishment stakes. Messages are passed from cell to cell and united action developed.

In the evenings, after the prisoners are locked in,

start the indoctrination classes. Prisoners are "taught" the elements of Marxist philosophy and the Leninist doctrine of revolutionary action. In the small prison world, with a chafing grievance of being clapped in jail to egg them on and distorting their views, raw prisoners become easy victims to the indoctrination proceediugs, and once they are caught in the net, it is difficult for them to come out even after they have been released. The Maulana had become a part of this grand, all-time scheme of things when he went to jail.

But, his religious training resisted. He was then given a dose of the amended version of the Communist doctrine. Didn't Islam believe in equality? So does Communism. Does not Islam call for a defiancc of law and rules as well as the law-makers and rulers who seek to distort these natural laws? It does. So does Communism, through revolution. Is not Soviet Union a predominantly Muslim Country, with the nations of Central Asia voluntarily joining it? It is. And so on and so forth. In the end the Maulana got through with imbibing a very garbled version of Communist doctrine in which Marxism-Leninism and Islam were so thoroughly mixed up that he could hardly realise which was which.

It is obvious that when Bhashani came out of the jail, he acted unconsciously as a catspaw of the Communists. Somewhere along the line he had also been told that partition of Bengal had been implemented through the conspiracy of the capitalists to divide the markets for their own greater interests, and it had to be undone. So Communism, Islam, equality of mankind, dissolution of partition, Hindu leadership of

India, Forward Block (of Subhas Bose) and all these factors got thoroughly mixed up in his mind. At a later stage, he became involved in a United (Jugto) Front tamasha in Tangail where gates were erected in the name of some of these Indian Hindu leaders as heroes.

The Maulana's mental make-up evolved further at a later stage until he became possessed of a national and political insight which was more clear than of any other politician of East Pakistan in the field. But, he was by then quite incapable of influencing the direction of events. Others had taken the field and its command.

Returning to our chronicle of subversion in East Pakistan, it would be necessary to mention about the volunteer army of one, J. P. Mitter. This gentleman was a migrant from East Bengal and had taken his abode in Calcutta, as did hundreds of thousands of other Hindus. He was a barrister-at-law by profession. In 1949, it became known to the East Pakistan Government that he had formed an "East Bengal Government-in-exile" in Calcutta and had "collected a volunteer army" of 35,000 men and women, who intended to *invade* East Pakistan. The people laughed at it. The Bengali Hindu was never a fighter. except through cunning and intrigue. How could he invade East Pakistan with an army of thirty-five thousand ?

But J. P. Mitter's army *did* invade East Pakistan. In 1950, the Liaquat-Nehru Pact was signed and it stipulated that all those members of the minority community in each country who had left their homes out of fear could return to them in safety which was guaran-

teed. Mitter's army walked into East Pakistan under the protections of this stipulation : most of them actually did belong to East Bengal. It spread out in the interior, and while newly educated East Pakistanis were clamouring for high stakes in jobs, these people—men and women—took teaching posts in villages and towns which paid a pittance and began nourishing the puny youngsters in the hatred of non-Bengalis, of West Pakistan and their own cultural norms. The results had to come out after another twenty or so years when these kids grew up to maphood and strengthened the legend of West Pakistan's "colonial" rule over East Pakistan. Indoctrinated at an early age, even facts and figures did not show them the reality: the phantom of hatred reared itself behind them and they only saw red.

By 19 1 the first phase of subversion was over. The teachers and prfessors had done their job and they left for India. A new section of young men had emerged from the colleges and the University, ready to take up their jobs in the Government and to have a positive say in the administration. The underground organisation of the Communists had spread itself over the University campus and was sending its tentacles outside as well. Hindu Bengali language had been solidly implanted and the movement for the recognition of Muslim Bengali was dead. The "army" of J. P. Mitter consisting of men and women from East Bengal had invaded East Pakistan and spread out in hamlets and towns in teaching jobs, beginning to injected poison into the minds of the youngsters and ready to spread the cult of

hatread elsewhere also, through their special contacts. There was a good deal of communist infiltration in some particular political parties, about which we shall read in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

Awami League and Jugto Front

In July 1947, the Muslim members of the Bengal Legislative Assembly, who represented the constituencies falling in the proposed East Pakistan area, met in Calcutta to elect a Leader. Husseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy had been the leader of the Bengal Muslim League Parlimentary Party, which held all the Muslim seats in the legislature, and was also the Chief Minister. But, while he had rendered yeoman service to the Muslims during and after the Calcutta riots of 1946, he had been responsible for one great error of judgment. He, without the knowledge of the Muslim League Command, joined hands with Sarat Chandra Bose in putting forward the demand for an "independent sovereign Bengal".

Let us put the record straight. It has been stated by some of the friends of Suhrawardy that the proposals were made at the instance of the Quaid-e-Azam. This is a travesty of facts. Quaid-e-Azam never knew

of any such scheme until it was broached. The suggestion of Suhrawardy being inspired by the Father of the Nation cannot also stand the severe test of historical scrutiny. As it was, the scheme indirectly upheld the theory of a Bengali nationalism—a pet child of Hindu political motivation. It cut at the roots of the Muslim notion in the subcontinent which the Quaid-e-Azam so rigorously stood by. If there was to be division of India, as proposed by the Quaid-e-Azam, it had to be on the basis of a single Muslim nation and no other. An independent, sovereign Bengal might have had a marginal Muslim majority, but it was not based on any ideological factor which the Muslims could appreciate, but one which was held by the Bengali Hindus and vigorously fought for at the time of the first administrative partition of Bengal in 1905-11.

In fact, the Quaid-e-Azam reprimanded Suhrawardy most strongly for this act of "sabotage" as it was termed, and playing into the hands of the Hindus. From then onwards Suhrawardy was not to be trusted. The Quaid-e-Azam himself had put forward a political principle during a talk with the workers of the Muslim League in Calcutta in early 1946: "Once a person is wanting in trust, throw him off and never again touch him with the longest pare of tongs." Suhrawardy had, by this act of joining hands with Sarat Bose, lost the trust of the Muslim League. It was openly discussed among the Muslim League circles at the time that the hero of the 1946 riots had been egged on by his own private ambitions, to be persuaded by his Marwari friends of Calcutta to put forward the new

theory.

Quaid-e-Azam had kept the struggle for Pakistan straight and would not allow it to be confused by side-issues or run-away propositions, of which there was a glut at the time. There were the so-called Princes of Oudh who had tried to recall the British treaties with the old kings of Lucknow, including Wajid Ali Shah, and demanded the return of Oudh to its rightful owners. There was a delegation which came all the way from the Muslim-majority areas of Burma, adjacent to Bengal, asking the Quaid to demand the annexation of their area to the proposed Pakistan. The Great Leader refused to give his support to any of these propositions. He stuck to his undiluted task for the setting up of a Muslim state on the basis of a Muslim nation. Suhrawardy's attempt was tantamount to a "stab-in-the-back". But the matter was not discussed publicly. The situation was too fraught with dangers to bring a cleavage within the Muslim ranks into the open.

At the same time, Suhrawardy's personal behaviour with his own partymen left much to be desired. He was openly discourteous to them. He threw files at his Ministers ; he abused them in public ; he even ignored a delegation of his party-members calling on him at his residence at 40 Theatre Road, Calcutta, engagement fixed, and walked out to keep some other private appointment, without even acknowledging their presence.

The result of the straight fight between him and Khwaja Nazimuddin for the leadership of the East Pakistan Assembly Parliamentary party of the Muslim

League, was inevitable. Suhrawardy lost by a big margin. Suhrawardy eventually decided to stay in India and to work for the unity of the Muslims left behind and to be their undisputed leader. He called a conference of the Indian "Muslim Leaders" at Calcutta. The proposed conference did not succeed. Suhrawardy, then, joined the entourage of Gandhi, "to save the Muslims from the wrath of the Hindus" as he then put it. He himself became the victim of this "wrath of the Hindus". The latter threw stones at him in the presence of Gandhi, and the Mahatma had to ask him to withdraw. Suhrawardy henceforth was without his vocation—leadership. He needed the proverbial straw on the camel's back, to tuck his tail between the legs and walk across the border to Pakistan. This was provided by the Indian Government who, true to their policy of utilizing the income-tax weapon to drive prominent persons out of the country, applied it to Suhrawardy as well. And he went over to East Pakistan.

This was 1948. Quaid-e-Azam had since gone to his Creator. As long as he lived, it was surmised, Suhrawardy dared not put his foot in East Pakistan. He could prove a headache to Nurul Amin, who was now Chief Minister, with Khawaja Nazimuddin elevated to the Governor-General's House in Karachi. His hands were full, trying to put together the backward pieces of the province. So Suhradwardy was promptly asked to leave it. He went to Karachi. There, he started a briefless practice at the Supreme and High Courts as barrister at law while looking around for a platform. The first he got was from the Revolutionary Socialist

Party, who were feeling the pinch due to the paucity of sympathetic leadership. Suhrawardy was no socialist, but it was "the boy and the wolf together" in the cold night. People learnt from the papers that the old leader of Bengal was around.

Suhrawardy, then, joined hadds with the Nawab of Mamdot to organize a party known as the Jinnah Muslim League. Later this name was changed to Jinnah Awami Muslim League and then only to Awami Muslim League. When the ban on Suhrawardy's entry to East Pakistan was lifted, he went there to set up his party roots. But there were very few of his old supporters to gather round his leadership. Many had been sucked in by the demands of personal welfare to a support of the Government party. Suhrawardy got only a few remnants of the disgruntled elements.

This situation was most suited for the Communists to do their act. Those of them who were out to get the use of a political party did not let the grass grow under their feet and infiltrated the Awami Muslim League. But as long as the name of "Muslim" was there, the Hindus could not join, and so for strategic reasons, "Muslim" was dropped from the name of the party, leaving it as "Awami League", pure and simple. Suhrawardy became the President of the Party, which presumed to have an all-Pakistan status, with Shamsul Haq as its General Secretary and Shaikh Mujibur Rahman as the Joint Secretary. Maulana Bhashani entered the Party with his group of leftists and became President of the East Pakistan Branch.

Shamsul Haq himself was a Communist fellow-traveller. With Bhashani came such persons as Khund-

kar Elias, Altaf Hussain and many others who towed the communist line, though outwardly they were not of any particular colour except that of the Awami League. Upto 1951, the declared policy of the Awami League was, more or less, the same as that of the Muslim League. In an interview with Suhrawardy, the author asked him why he opposed the Muslim League when his objectives were the same. He replied that the differences lay in implementation, accused Liaqat of not fully working for the objectives. Asked what was the guarantee that if he came to power he would work for the aims, he said if he did not, he could be thrown off the way he wished to remove the existing regime—through popular support. That was a patent answer of a politician; but, it left the question a-begging.

Events in East Pakistan were taking a different turn, over which Suhrawardy had no control. In February 1952, Khawaja Nazimuddin (now Prime Minister of Pakistan) made a statement about Urdu becoming the *lingua franca* of Pakistan. This provided the much-needed handle to the underground evil-alliance of the Communists and Indian agents to test the strength of their secret organisation. Forthwith was mounted an agitation in favour of Bengali. A Committee of Action was formed, mostly of University students, with Ataur Rahmam Khan as Chairman, and Dacca seemed to have gone mad. Students came out on the streets, recklessly shouting for Bengali. On the corner of the Medical College Hostel, not a stone's throw from the Provincial Assembly Hall, a loudspeaker was fitted which continued a barrage of speeches in favour of Bengali, round the clock. All efforts by Nurul Amin to persuade

the studeuts to maintain peace as the language question was not even under consideration at the time, proved of no avail. Section 144 was promulgated in the proximity of the Assembly Hall as the House was in session and the students were threatening to march on it. This was the signal for its defiance. On Febuary 16, a procession marching towards the Hall was stopped by the Police on the gates of the Medical College Hostel, threatening to get out of hand. The police was pelted with stones. It fired a few rounds, and the stray bullets flying recklessly, hit three young men inside the hostel, who were having no part in the demonstration. Next day, *Morning News* came out with a truthful report of the incident. But, the students wanted a more colourful version of their own. Early next morning they burnt the machinery which printed the paper.

The three students killed were turned into "martyrs",* and the agitation received further phillip. The Committee of Action demanded that Bengali should be declared a state language there and then, which was impossible.

The Awami League took advantage of the situation and it adopted the cause of Bengali as one of its prime objectives. It departed from the policy Suhrawardy himself had enunciated. The weight of its own followers was too heavy to be diverted and the Leader was simply left high and dry. Ataur Rahman Khan, till now a second class lawyer practising at the Dacca

**Shaheeds*. This would indicate how far political machiavellism has played a part in utilising religious nomenclature to its own ends. A *shaheed* is one who lays down his life for Islam, not for a language not even their own.

Court, emerged as a political figure.

The agitation continued unabated for some time, until it was brought under control through a large number of arrests. It was in the midst of this hullabaloo that Mujibur Rahman got his first public debut as a hero of the agitation. This was when he went with a mob to the jail, threatening to break the gates and in a misplaced enthusiasm tried *to climb the big prison door.* Before the police arrived, however, he had hastily climbed down and got lost in the crowd, leaving the Police to search for him. He remained in hiding for several days until he was arrested and sent inside. His act was simply an example of childish theatricals, but it was painted as something heroic so that all the limelight went to him leaving some of the leftist sponsors of the agitation unconcerned.

Again, a reference to the records of the *Morning News* of the period would reveal that most of the leaders who took part in working up the mob hysterics, were Hindus. They kept the tempo high, but most cleverly put others forward whenever there was a direct clash brewing up with the forces of law and order. As a result of this some of the innocent youngsters, who were out to take their enjoyment in the midst of the ensuing fireworks, got picked up. But they had their own bout of indoctrination once they went to prison.

In the melee, however, the Awami League got a lift which it had not hoped for in years. A number of new faces found a chance to enter the arena and obtain popularity. At the same time, the Awami League got a definite objective to strive for, a well-defined line for

agitating and a cut-and-dried route to popularity.

We need not go into the fortunes of the Awami League, as this is not a political history of East Pakistan but a chronicle of the province's subversion by its enemies which eventually ended in the war of aggression of 1971 and the establishment of Bangladesh. But, Awami League henceforward became an organization which pushed forward the policies of the subverteurs and provided their cause under a political cover. This all happened without Suhrawardy being a party to it. Often enough, it was believed at the time that the Leader and the Party were definitely at cross-purposes with each other. But, Suhrawardy could not do without a party behind him and the party members needed a leader of all-Pakistan status to provide it with the requisite prestige.

In 1953, the regime of Khwaja Nazimuddin was dismissed and power went into the hands of Ghulam Muhammad. He came to Dacca and at an airport interview with the press, brandished his stick and promised a tough deal to the disturbing elements in the province. Soon general elections were announced for the province.

The elections provided a unique opportunity to the agents of subversion. They very soon proposed a joint front against the Muslim League. It is generally believed that Suhrawardy was the architect of the Jugto (or United) Front. This is not wholly correct. The technique of the "joint front" is available in a published form among the methods to be adopted by the Communists in the newly independent countries of Asia. It is quite simple, indeed, in its operational

mechanism. First, the disgruntled elements are all to be brought together on one platform, then a programme is to be devised which should be impossible of achievement. With the shortcomings of the regime in power flaunted before the electorate and the zealous programme presented to them, success at the polls obtained. Once the Front gets into power, it has to be demolished, and each party, trying itself out in power, declared a failure as measured against the original programme. The main body infiltrated by the Communists is never to go into power, and so prove still to be capable of delivering the goods, by remaining *the only party which had not failed.*

This technique had to be implemented, of course, through the Awami League and Suhrawardy had to work matters out either knowing all of its implications or without knowing them and only being obsessed with the thought of defeating the Muslim League.

The Jugto (United) Front came into existence, and a 21-point programme was drafted. (Of this only seven points could be implemented by all the Governments of the Jugto Front put together). The leader of the Front was to be Sher-e-Bengal A. K. Fazlul Huq, who had been in the doldrums for the last twelve years, ever since he was explelled from the Muslim League by the Quaid-e-Azam, on the question of his nomination to the Viceroy's Defence Council (in 1942). Proposer of the Pakistan Resolution of Lahore, Fazlul Huq had gone into complete eclipse as the Quaid-e-Azam led the Muslims to the goal of Pakistan. He had a mighty score to settle with the Muslim League. On the other hand, the Communists

and other anti-state elements wanted a person who had been something of a legend once to flaunt him before the public for a negative vote.

The election campaign of the Jugto Front put into execution one of the most powerful machines of unorthodox propaganda and vote-catching devices that South East Asia has ever seen. It had nothing positive to offer on its own, excepting the 21-point programme, 99 per cent of whose backers could not even recapitulate it. It battened on a negative aspect of publicity—the acts of omission and commission by the Muslim League Government. The province had to go through such a tough period of setting up shop from the very outset, that it was certain that there had to be a large list of shortcomings on the card. In its true perspective, what the Muslim League had achieved under the circumstances, was beyond the possibilities of imagination even: it had stabilised the economy of the province and its administration, working more or less in a vacuum. For that it should have received bouquets. But, the enemies of the state, wedded to the task of bringing back instability, offered it brickbats, through the people.

This was done through the simple mechanism of providing as many forums for political discussions as possible, irrespective of the various names under which they were setup. "Clubs" were opened in the urban areas, thousands of organizations with a multiplicity of names and as many objectives, sprouted all over the urban as well as the rural areas. All of them provided forums for discussion. One had only to start a political debate and the argument eventually led to

the problems and difficulties which faced the common man. Only one person was needed to steer the discussion towards the apportionment of blames, and they all reached the Muslim League Government as naturally as a straight short road reaches its end.

A few months of hard and intensive work setting up these clubs and organizations, and the whole province was ringing with the condemnation of Nurul Amin—who became eventually the symbol of all the spouting venom. "*Nurul Aminer Kalla Chahi*" (We want the head of Nurul Amin) was the cry begun somewhere, which gained momentum till the whole province echoed with it. Simultaneously a legend was also built up. If not the Muslim League, then who? The answer was at hand. Fazlul Huq (or Huq Shaib as he was called), who else? The two cries were being built up side by side. In ten years a new generation of former kids was coming of age. They had heard that Fazlul Huq was once a great leader of Muslim Bengal. They had no clear idea why he was ousted from the Muslim League. Now suddenly his geni was taken out of the bottle and it grew and grew in dimensions out of all proportion to his capabilities or his sincerity and loyalty to Pakistan. The re-birth of Fazlul Huq was also a subtle condemnation of the Quaid-e-Azam who had expelled him from the Muslim League. At this stage who cared whether the reasons were sound or not for which he had to be ousted?

The propaganda also saturated the minds of the people with dissatisfaction with their lot. And in the proper places and at the proper time, it was easy to

put in a word or two about the language, about the treatment of East Pakistan as a colony, about the transfer of the province's earnings to the development of West Pakistan and so on.

Such a gigantic propaganda machine could not have been built up by the East Pakistanis on their own. The "army" of J.P. Mitter, a shoal of trained Communist and Indian agitators and men who easily crossed the border, for a short stay, and then exit—flitters as I would call them—and the product of the Dacca University, perfected by Hindu professors, all of them combined to carry the propaganda to the farthermost corners of the province.

The plan had been put into execution so quietly that not even the leaders of the Jugto Front could surmise their landslide victory. The results of the polls even surprised them very much. The Jugto Front won, hands down. The Muslim League could get only nine seats in the Assembly, all of the rest going to the Jugto Front and a handful of independents. The Front went merrily into power, with Fozlul Huq as Chief Minister.

What came immediately in the wake of the Jugto Front, replacing the Muslim League into power, was even more surprising and shocking. People were aghast as to what was happening around them. The events were unfolding themselves so fast and with such surprising suddeness that it hardly gave any one time to think. But there was definite method in the madness. Everything was being worked out according to plan, the brains calmly pulling the strings from across the border. Some of these people went even so

far as to believe that East Pakistan would fall soon like a house of cards. That was, no doubt, a tall order.

As soon as the election results were out, there was a spate of meetings, jalsas and get-togethers to celebrate the victory. The main guest on these occasions was not A. K. Fazlul Huq, as could be expected, but Maulana Abdul Hameed Khan Bhashani. Sometimes, the Maulana attended as many as four or five of these meets. At the same time, he was issuing statements at the tremendous rate of six to eight per day. Were they issued by him personally or by his henchmen? Some of the statements carried signatures in English, some in Bengali, and they did not tally with each other. The conclusion is, therefore, inescapable that the statements were being issued by others than the Maulana himself. Newspapers hardly have enough time to check up the veracity: and, since the statements were never challenged by the Maulana, no one cared to doubt them. One could only draw the conclusion that even if they were not drafted or written out by the Maulana himself, they had his okey. In addition to these, there were the speeches of Bhashani which were filling the pages of the newspapers, which we would analyse later.

The Maulana had recently been "baptised" by the Communists through his indoctrination in the jail, howmuchsoever imperfect it was from the point of view of the red theorists. He was, however, a very handy stooge in their hands. He was constantly surrounded by these partisans of the revolution. The objective was simple enough. The election campaign had thrown up A. K. Fazlul Haq as a legend and as a hero of

East Pakistanis. But he was not a Communist; more, he could not be trusted to tow the line laid down by them, as he had always been slippery. The legend had to he smashed, but not by open and direct opposition as that would have smashed the Jugto Front itself, rather prematurely. So, while Fazlul Haq was played down, Bhashani was played up in the public mind, through meetings, through banquets and through the press and the radio.

At one open meeting at the Paltan Maidan, in which both Fazlul Haq and Bhashani were present, the latter brandished his stick in the face of Fazlul Huq and said, "I will use this if Huq did not behave well with the public"-since the Ministry was being headed by Fazlul Huq. The old man, much too senior to Bhashani, was hurt by this and, when talking to the press immediately after the meeting, burst into tears on the manner he was disgraced. The objective of this was to let the people in general know that the *party* held greater power than the *government.* This was also the message which was given to the Administration.

In meetings held by Bhashani in rural areas, Goverment officials were ordered to be present, and were put up on a kind of trial before the public without the formality of any evidence. Any one who could have the ear of the Maulana or any other leader of the Awami League, could whisper a complaint against an official and forthwith he was made to stand in public and answer the charge. District officials were ordered about through telephone calls or direct commands from the members of the party (meaning the Jugto Front), or through Ministers. Even the depart-

mental Secretaries were not spared. H. S. M. Ishaq, a most capable Chief Secretary who had spent most of his life in the service of the Muslims of East Bengal, told the Press Consultative Committee that he was having a very hard time running the administration, as his orders of an administrative nature were being constantly countermanded by the hotch-potch leadership of the Jugto Front, while even district officials were afraid to take any decision in any matter for fear of their being hauled up before public meetings.

The objective was very clear. The Communists and their capitalist friends from India, managed things so subtly as to hit at the administrative hold of the province, so that they could freely indulge in gun-running and other activities for the objective of building a revolution in the region. To a very large extent they were successful. In the pursuit of this objective, they went far beyond merely hitting at organized official work. A couple of months after the *Jugto* Front went into power, the province was plunged into chaos through strikes, lock-outs and rioting. The targets were mainly the industrial units of the area.

East Pakistan was taking ambitious steps in the direction of setting up some kind of industrial base. It had received in patrimony eight cotton mills and four sugar mills, all belonging to Hindus. So far as jute was concerned, the region did not have at the time of independence even a single pucca baling press, not to speak of a manufacturing unit. The golden fibre was just picked up from Muslim producers by Marwaris and their agents at important primary marketing centres at extremely cheap prices, who made it

into "kutcha" bales, loaded on to the flats and paddle steamers of the Joint Steamer Companies (a purely British concern) by Oriya Hindu labour and transported to Hooghly, where it was either processed in the 109 jute mills (only two of which were owned by Muslims: Adamjee's and Ispahani's) or packed into pucca bales and exported through Calcutta. We have seen in a previous chapter how through this activity, the real producers were deprived of all excepting a very small portion of the earnings from the fibre.

After independence, India had continued to be the main buyer. This was a handle utilized by that country in an attempt to force a reduction in price, when in 1949 India devalued its rupee and Pakistan did not. With Pakistan refusing to agree, Indian buyers declined to buy East Pakistan's jute, hoping thereby to force this country's hands, as it was hoped hundreds of thousands of the cultivators would not be able to sell their fibre, and as a consequence, starve. This was what is known in the annals of trade as the "jute war". Pakiskistan refused to be cowed down. The Jute Board was set up, the National Bank of Pakistan organized, and most easy credit was extended so that all the jute held by the cultivators could be brought and stored. The onset of the Korean War solved the dangerous tangle for Pakistan. The fear of the war spreading forced the developed countries to stock-pile and all of Pakistan's jute was sold out at boom prices. Simultaneously, new markets for the fibre became available, though India still remained the top buyer.

This was an experience which taught Pakistan many lessons. India's continued hostility on the eco-

nomic front, a part of her overall machinations to undo partition of the subcontinent, was most effectively brought home. While most of the buyers in world markets could easily purchase manufactured items, raw jute had only a restricted market-potential. Pakistan had to set up its own processing plants of the fibre. In 1950, the foundation of the 3,000-loom Adamjee Jute Mills was laid through the Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation—a gigantic single set of three units, employing about 25,000 labour. By 1954, the mills were working full blast. This became an eye-sore to the Indians. Shortly after the Jugto Front succeeeed ed to power, riots were engineered in the Adamji Mills, between Bengalis and non-Bengalis, and in a single day of terrible carnage, 4000 people were killed, including women and children. The objective was to achieve the closing down of the mills.

As soon as the riots were let lose in Adamjeenagar about 10 miles from Dacca, there was a glut of rumours, not like the natural concommitants of such events. They were intelligently spread. For example, in a predominantly non-Bengali area it was being passed from mouth to mouth that all the non-Bengalis had been mercilessly butchered in the Adamjee Mills, and whispers were set afoot to egg the majority in the area to wreak vengeance on the Bengalis. The story in predominantly Bengali areas was the reverse. Isolated cases of attack did occur, but, on the whole no serious fighting could break out. But the objective was partly achieved in that it left the two sides suspicious of each other and with antipathy aroused which could not wholly be eradicated.

Just about the same time, labour in the Chandraghona Paper Mills was so aroused as to make them attack their General Manager and Chief Engineer, Khursheed, and some of his collegues who were beaten to death, their corpses mutilated and thrown into the Karnaphuly river in gunny bags. Here again, the plan was the same. The killed officers of the mill were all non-Bengalis. One of them was a remarkable prodigy in paper manufacture. He was an illiterate technican formerly working in the Titaghur Paper Mills at Calcutta,—who could tell by sight and by taste the required quantity of chemicals in the pulp-base mixture—nam·d Kalu Khan. His death was a severe loss to the Mill and in his place several foreign chemical experts had to be imported on astronomical salaries and advances, adding to the cost of the product.

Some time later, a clash ensued between the Pathan and Bengali labour at the site of the Karnaphuly Hydroelectric dam at Kaptai, 10 miles above Chandraghona in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. This was also brought under control after tremendous efforts on the part of the Engineers and officers supervising the construction. But, again, the dissension left permanent scars on the labour make-up, driving a wedge between sections who were previously straining hard for the objective of constructing the dam at the earliest.

It is not idle speculation that the blame is placed on underground activity engineered from across the border. There was ample evidence to prove it, and not the least of which is that the points selected for the outbursts were the three major projects in the programme of industrialization of East Pakistan, cutting down

the province's dependence on Indian trade. The technique utilized was basically foreign to the genius of the East Pakistanis, but based on their emotional nature and jealousy of migrant technical hands even though East Pakistan could not produce a single person to take their place. Besides, two other objectives were achieved. First, the otherwise harassed law and order and administrative echelons were harrassed with still greater burdens on their hands, what with the spread of rumours and tension, further vitiating their efficiency. Second, the wedge between the local-born people and the migrants became permanent and this, considered in the light of the background to service rendered to East Pakistan by the migrants in the early years of independence, was fatal. Many of the technical hands from among the migrants and from West Pakistan refused to serve in the wing, and capital formation (non-existent in East Pakistan) became more shy, slowing down the development of the province.

Further, industrial units owned by the Hindus, in cotton textiles and sugar, were completely unaffected. From some of them, as from the Laxminarayan Cotton Mills across the Sitalakya river in Narayangunj, manpower was actually sent to take part in the Adamjee rioting and power supply passing through it was cut off. Among the labour itself were found highly-educated and trained Indian working at a pittance, but leading the organization of labour unions.

The Central Government was actually convinced that the ground had been laid for an armed insurrection which could have actually commenced, had it allowed matters to slip by. The Jugto Front ministry

was dismissed and Governor's rule clamped on the province. Shortly afterwards, some of the leaders of the Front were taken to Comilla Cantonment and there shown a display of the nation's armed capacity, and practically told off that an internal armed insurrection was an idle dream which could never came to fruition. For a fortnight after the imposition of the Governor's rule, the army was kept in complete readiness to meet any eventuality. But the fears proved misplaced, as the disruptive forces appeared thoroughly cowed down. Probably, it was at this time brought home to them that an internal revolution based soley on the inherent strength of the Indian agents, East Pakistani saboteurs and partisans, was an impossibility. Foreign intervention had to play a part before East Pakistan could be actually subverted. This really happened when the final culmination of the subversive activities came about in 1971.

The domination of Jugto Front by the communists is proved by such incidents as that of Aruna Sen we have related earlier. It also gives an insight into the extent to which their machinations had reached in capturing the imagination of the East Pakistani youth. The erstwhile foreign murderess of four innocent compatriots was glossed over as of no import as against the woman's pluck to defy the *symbols of authority*. Her criminal act was twisted into one of heroism. The conversion of the policemen as those who epitomise the "evil" of the capitalist exploitation, serving as its handle, is a part of the Communist technique, gaining two direct advantages from it: the vitiation of law and order and the placing before half-baked minds the body

of a well-defined "enemy", thus giving a clear shape to revolutionary objectives. In the emotional characterisation of this, the fact is completely overlooked that the policeman himself is just an ordinary member of the society doing a job of work to make his livelihood and also trying to protect the people from the activities of the criminals. Even if he is corrupt and misused, a great part of his work gets done and the law of the jungle not allowed to prevail, which would if he were not there.

For about a month or so that Aruna Sen was a "patient" in the Dacca Medical College Hospital, she was the cynosure of a remarkable student "mela". Nurses looked after her in relays, poems were written to extol her virues and heroism, condemning the forces that treated her "cruelly" and tales composed to bring her out as the central figure of a heroine. All Hospital rules were allowed to be broken and complete freedom of movement prevailed, so much so that the relatives of other patients had to protest. All this was going on during the Chief Ministership of Fazlul Haq who could be anything but a Communist himself. She was at last sent on to India, but not before a great deal of mischief had been done to the thinking of immature student minds.

To the student of subversion in East Pakistan, it had also become apparent by this time that there has been a *marriage de convenience* between the Communists and the capitalists of India who were both working for the common objective of undoing the separate existence of the province, and were cooperating with each other for that reason. The communists were still getting

their directions from their Indian mentors, on the lines deduced to be best by the social researchers of Moscow. There was no pro-Chinese lobby till then.

Somewhere along the line, Shaikh Mujibur Rahman had been promoted to the post of General Secretary of the Awami League, for the simple reason that the situation had become vacant with the death of Shamsul Haq, and not because of merit. As long as Suhrawardy was there the Shaikh could hardly grow his political wings. He was not even capable of learning the deep Communist philosophy, though influenced by the infiltrators in the Awami League. The language of his statements and speeches was most dicidedly steeped in their special terminology. Personally he had no compunction to indulge in some corruption on the side. Not having enough money during his childhood, youth and early days of politics, he wanted to grab as much as be could. So, on his insistence, the Anti-Corruption Department was removed from the Police fold and he was made its Minister-in-Charge. By the time he went to jail on the dismissal of the Jugto Front, he had built a pretty nest-egg for himself and was enabled to indulge freely in his antics in politics. Some of the businessmen and industrialists had seen in him a potential catspaw since he was so easy to corrupt offers, that they decided to back him with a little of their finances as an investment for the future, during the time that he was cooling his heels in state prisons.

The Awami League, during this period, was more under the active leaderseip of Maulana Bhashani, and Suhrawardy was just a President in name only. More so, because there was no full-fledged party for the whole

of Pakistan and the League was restricted to East Pakistan only. Thus Suhrawardy was President of the same party which was the provincial Awami League and which had another Chairman in the person of the Maulana. This was the practical situation ; theoretically there was an all Pakistan party and a provincial one. At the time the impression had gained ground that between Suerawardy and the Awami League there was a marriage of convenience : Suhrawardy badly needed a party to further his political ambi'ions and the Awami League required a leader of an all Pakistan standing, and the two got together without a proper consummation of the liaison. It was not unusual for Suhrawardy to be repudiated by his own so-called followers in private meetings of the party.

The fact was that the Awami League was thoroughly infiltrated by the Communists and other anti-Pakistan elements while Suhrawardy in spite of his personal ambitions, was not unpatriotic and, therefore, unwilling to put his seal on policies which were to harm national interests. But, since he could not do without the party, it happened many times that he left discussions in a huff, and proceeded to Karachi ostensibly on some mission connected with his legal profession, leaving the others to indulge in their own special kind of antics. The Awami League was at such times left to the mercies of leadership supposed to have been provided by Bhashani. That august personage, however was himself led by a group who surrounded him and got him to act as they wished.

CHAPTER 7

New Power to Subversion

Since the flare up of the language controversy, a new trend of emotionalism was marked among the youth of East Pakistan. The antipathy to Urdu among them was also accompanted by a growing animosity to religion. In 1953, the Awami Leaguers pulled some quite a lot of beards after a public meeting of the Muslim League.

Now why should this be? There are several connections. The only demand which the Awami League had put forward, over and above :the programme which was similar to that of the Muslim League, was the right of the Bengali language to be one of the state languages of Pakistan and probably another : that of better prospects of East Pakistani in services. These two had nothing to do with religion, unless one goes deeper into the motivations of the prime movers of them. The basis of Pakistan was a cultural and national entity based on religion. This had to be demolished. Communists or Hindus, Islam was their bugbear. As long as there were fanatic adherents of it in Pakistan, the nation

could not be cracked. So, from the begginning those who flaunted religion through their appearance or clothes were the objective of terrorism by those who filled the ranks of the Awami League.

Two years prior to these events, that is, in 1951, the Muslim League had come out with a programme to make good the lack of capital-formation or commercial propensities among native-born East Pakistanis. "There is no blackmarket in import licences," declared Fazlur Rahman, the then Commerce Minister of Pakistan. "The selling of these is according to the policy pursued by the Government." Import licences in a very large number had been issued to non-commercial local East Pakistanis, and since they neither knew how nor had the cash to open letters of credit, they were selling them to non-Bengali traders. The "policy" Fazlur Rahman talked about was to provide cash to people of East Pakistan against that piece of paper called an "import licence," earned without labour or without deserving. "The cash," he explained "would set them up in business." In reality it provided a pension to a lot of people, enabling them to remain idle and indulge in parochial politics, or acquire expensive habits. The demands which provided them with this windfall, stood to gain momentum. There are no short-cu·s to the earning of cash and anything which departs from the basic economic law of compensation against productive effort through labour, is bound to create social complications.

Licensing was done every six months, and quite a large number of people got these half-yearly doles, big enough to confirm them in their idleness or spending

sprees. As demands succeeded, more of them were put forward and as they too were satisfied, the stakes got still higher. But investment capacities, more or less, stayed where they were. Politics had a glut of new recruits, sympathising with the Awami League. This sort of actions provided the *agents provocateur* with a lot of fresh blood. The hue and cry which the Awami League raised had, therefore, little enough basis in fact.

The habit of getting money without working is just like the habit of narcotics. It makes a man useless, from the point of view of his capacity to work and to earn. Cut off the supply, when once you become habituated, and you would be ready to do anything to have it restored. It was to prove later on to be a good recruiting gadget for subverteurs. The restoration of further supplies of cash could come from altogether a different source, calling for little more than joining a protest chorus against "economic tyranny" over East Pakistan.

Independence also proved a boon to the real estate owners. In urban areas, value of real estate soared overnight, as the Government and the refugees came to the province. Year after year, the trends looked upwards. Petty landholders in the towns had just to sit and watch, and grow in opulence. In fifteen years, the values had gone up one thousand times in certain areas, from Rs. 100 per *kani* (2.5 *kanis* make one acre) to Rs. 100,000 per *kani*, as in Dhanmandi in Dacca.

Jute cultivators, and those of other cash crops, were also getting a much greater multiple of their produce in value. The Hindu exploiter had gone, or

was going, and their own Government was constantly with its nose to the anvil devising new ways and means to provide the farmer with better return for his produce. The prosperity was not restricted to the cities and towns only but it was extending to rural areas as well. As the plans for setting up jute industries began taking shape, the prosperity increased. But, at the outset there being very little capital-formation capacity among the local people, it could not be helped if investment and management know-how had to be provided by migrants or investors from West Pakistan.

The attempt at disrupting the industrial base in 1954 could hardly be explained away on the basis of any justified "demands." The wave of lawlessness had been nothing but a part of a greater underhand scheme to destroy any change in the fortunes o the people for the better. The methods utilised leave no room for doubt that the people were never given a chance to analyse the situation on the cold touchstone of logic, but were carried away on the crest of a wave of emotion on a suicidal path. The sentiment generated by a vast barrage of whispering propaganda turned the heads of many otherwise intelligent persons. This was actually the objective of the intense subversive activity that had been going on since independence.

The imposition of Governor's rule in 1954 suddenly brought the temperatures down, and in a matter of hours the whole tempo of activity changed. A large number of *agents provocateur* having been arrested and sent to prison, others forced to go underground, there were none left to control the direction of the emotional upsurge. There were no rumours floating about un-

hampered, no tell-tale stories designed to arouse tempers. Everything settled down so suddenly that the calm itself appeared disturbing.

The Jugto Front kept itself tied up in a single organisation for just a few months only. The initiative had all the time been in the hands of the Communists, and they had done all that was necessary to destroy the efficiency of unity and were ready to launch the second phase of their programme: that of trying each constituent of the Front against the touchstone of the 21-point programme, prove the government of each as wanting and to have it thrown out.

The Jugto Front gave place first to the government of the Krishak Sramik Party under the leadership of Abu Hussain Sarkar, with the Awami League in the opposition. This could not last very long. Then came the Awami League with Ataur Rahman Khan as the Chief Minister. Before the Awamis went into power, there was an internal tussle amongst them. The Communist faction, led by Maulana Abdul Hameed Khan Bhashani was against taking over power, while Ataur Rahman, Mujib and others were in favour. The two factions broke lose and the Bhashani group remained outside.

Suhrawardy had also been selected by Iskandar Mirza, now President, to become the Prime Minister of Pakistan heading a coalition made to order. He was too much entangled in the Central Government policies to give greater attention to East Pakistan. And, as a result of this, during the hegemony of the Awami League there was a large-scale cultural invasion of East Pakistan from India.

The Awami League, under the leadership of Suhrawardy, had consolidated some gains. One of them was the acceptance of Bengali as one of the two state languages of Pakistan in the 1956 Constitution of the country, piloted by Chaudhry Muhammad Ali, at the time Prime Minister of Pakistan. The other was the principle of parity. The latter was considered to be a solution of the problem of disputed claims for dominance by either of the two wings. The credit must go to Chaudhry Muhammad Ali for trying to safeguard West Pakistan from an eventual domination by East Pakistan on the basis of population, to be able to trade parity with the language issue. But this was not a fool-proof solution, as it did settle the question for the time being while sowing the seeds of a fatal confrontation. The only other way could be the spread of a rigorous nationalistic outlook which could eradicate barriers between one region or the other. But, as things had been working out, this was certainly a tall order. In other words, the eventual separation of the two wings had been written out in the 1956 Constitution, with just a breathing respite for the country, and the total subversion of East Pakistan by the enemy agents could be said to have been achieved if only in theory. The practical shape of it was certain to follow as surely as night follows day.

The failure of the gigantic effort at completing the subversion in 1954, had taught the subverteurs a number of lessons, among them that East Pakistan was still too much tied to religion to allow itself to be an easy goat for sacrifice. The cultural subversion had not taken place on a scale which the objectives demanded.

So, it was during the Awami League period that a large number of people, mostly Hindu migrants from former East Bengal, returned, carrying an their back a new cultural programme. They setup shop in Dacca, Chittagong, Khulna, Comilla and other towns of East Pakistan. Their main involvements were in the realm of "culture". Music schools were opened in all the major towns, dancing classes were initiated, amateur and semi-professional dramatic clubs were established. But the biggest of all these was the rehabilitation of the old "Jatra" theatre. This is a type of open-air theater, people sitting all around (with only a small passage for the entry and exit of the dramatis personae) and the stage in the middle. There was no scenario or any other kind of screens. The stage resembled somewhat a boxers' ring.

Jatra was very popular with the rural people, but even in cities it drew thousands of spectators. Although in the days after independence, it was sorely neglected, it caught on very rapidly on its re-introduction, and once again captured an unprecendented popularity. Most of the people, including those in the Government, took it just as a sort of entertainment and no one bothered about the subtle massage it delivered. Most of the stories presented were specially written across the border. The themes were often selected from the history of the Muslims in India, but depicting the struggle between the Delhi government and the independent kingdom of Bangala. The dialogue was powerful and it had a series of veritable speeches against the distant "Central Goverument". To arouse emotions, the "Bengalis" (Muslim) were shown as victims of tyranny

by the representatives of Delhi, either in the matter of woman, or land, or language. Of course, the "free spirit of Bengal" always won, earning a great deal of appreciation from the audiences.

The main centre of the Jatra parties was Brahmanbaria, and the persons taking part were mixed, both Hindus and Muslims, but Hindus exceeded in the ratio of three to one. In a number of such plays I witnessed I found the actors and actresses most highly trained and often even better than their more sophisticated stage-drama counterparts. Where were they trained? These "parties" had no Government backing, nor was there any apparent private investments from East Pakistanis themselves, no practice or training classes. The Jatra merely burst out of the blue on enthusiastic audiences, and with a perfectly prepared artistic talent in tow.

Dance-drama had been revived soon after independence. Bulbul, an educated Muslim danceuse from Mymensingh, had formed his own troupe and introduced the ballet. But Bulbul had sought to lay the tradition of composing Muslim themes, like the "Dream of Hafiz", "Razia Sultana", and so on. Unfortunately he died in 1953, and his project for a school of music, dance and drama on the lines he was trying to develop, passed into the hands of people who turned it into something different. The Bulbul Academy of Fine Arts was established at Dacca and eschewing the Bulbul tradition went back to the Hindu-style music and dance, even with Hindu *ustads*.

At the same time, the death of Abbasuddin also took away the ghazal form of music from the scene

as well as exclusive Nazrul Giti, and gave a chance for the Rabindra Sangeet and other forms of Indian Bengali music to flourish in the garb of "Palli Giti" or modern songs.

In 1956 and later, numerous schools which opened all over East Pakistan, completely Hinduized the musical arts. At the same time a number of dramatic clubs and institutions were set up with the same motive as the Jatra. Some of the dramas staged were based on books written in Calcutta; some were specially written for East Pakistani audiences. The objective was to deride Muslim rulers of India and present them in a bad light. In one such drama, presented by the Prachya Chhanda Gitika of Chittagong (a Hindu music school, established in 1956), Shahjehan was depicted as a debauch and Mumtaz Mahal loving another boy from whom she had been snatched by the King and who had prepared a model of Taj Mahal to serve "as a home" for the pair! This was aimed at killing Muslim pride in their own historical tradition as such.

Dacca was the main centre of this specially imported cultural activity, with special attention to the young students, who were gradually moulded into an alien tradition passed muster as their own. In 1968, during the political movement, a group of students made it a point to indulge in early morning music under a pipal tree, just at the time when devout Muslims entered mosques to say their *Fajr* prayers. This was part of a Hindu cultural tradition named "*Prabhat Pheris*".

The objective of all these new-fangled cultural ac-

tivitieswas to wean the youth from religion and to instil a feeling that theirs and the Hindu culture was one and the same. This was begun so quietly and carried forward so relentlessly that in due course it largely succeeded. In the late sixties, again, there was a terrific upsurge when under the orders of Khwaja Shahabud-din, then Federal Minister of Information and Broad-casting, the songs and verses of Rabindranath Tagore were banned from the Radio. It had been banned for many years before also but at the time no one had cared, or rather had willingly acquiesced in the exclusion of that alien music. During the intervening time, the cultural infiltration had done its work and Tagore had once again been adopted as a "national genius" of the "Bangalis".

In 1955, the Awami Leaguers, with the support of other partisans of the Jugto Front, staged a tamasha at Kagmari in Tangail. It was a sort of politico-cultural conference, its leading light being Suhrawardy. Gates were erected in the name of Subhas Bose and some other Bengali Indian leaders, and there was a great gala celebration. Another person who was most active in the organisation of this tamasha was Maulana Bhashani.

The story of subversion of the period would not be complete unless mention is made of a close Hindu friend of Suhrawardy, R. P. Saha. He was supposed to be a zemindar of a place named Mirzapur not very far from Dacca. He was also the Trustee of a jute business known as the Kumidini Welfare Trust. With enormous funds at the disposal of the Trust, Saha had set up a hospital at Mirzapur, with 90 per cent Hindu

Indian doctors and a host of pretty Hindu nurses. Apart from the Hospital, there was a school alongside and an orphanage run on Hindu style. That was all very well. But Saha's organisations had gathered a reputation of being an infallible source for providing high class entertainment of all types to officials and members of Government. I myself witnessed a stage drama put forward by an all-female cast of the Trust institutions, which could beat any professional dramatic company to shame for its extremely fine rendering. All said and done, Saha's neat little retreat continued to function as a nest of infiltrators or saboteurs for years, right under the nose of all sorts of successive governments! For, Saha had obviously hit upon a formula which was the most efficacious in lulling the suspicions of any nosey-parker, official or unofficial.

Yet another hush Hindu organisation was the business firm of Sadhana Aushahalaya, ostensibly an auyurvedic pharmaceutical concern, but actually a cover for numerous underground activities. It was making money hand over fist by selling its famous brand of medicine known as Mritasanjibani Sura, a clear form of medicated wine used as such by thousands of alocoholics in both the wings, while the Aushadhalaya paid excise duty on medicinal alcohol. The house-cum-factory-cum-office of the company was a veritable fort within the city of Dacca. No one could enter or leave it without the aging Professor-Proprietor knowing about it. The latter lived alone, like a recluse, on the premises. His family members were all in India. His publicity agents were a firm known as Bharat Publicity, having only one account on their list, that of Sadhana's.

The company got a fat licence every half-yearly for the import of medicinal herbs from India. All this was on the up and up. What went on behind the scenes, no one knew. Where did the enormous profits gathered on the sale of the medicinal-wine disappear was also a mystery.

In Chittagong also there was the Prabartak Sangha, a 29-acre hilly land in the middle of the city, with as many as 21 buildings spread over it, surrounded by barbed wire fencing inside which no Muslim could go. It was supposed to be a school-cum-orphanage complex. In 1971 March, it turned out to be a regular fort for attack by the rebels on the road joining the Cantonment with the city. Papers found in its compound later on, revealed that it had a net-work of agents spread all over East Pakistan engaged in extensive political activity. It served as a safe enough clearing-house for information which went to India from there.

There were many other such nests scattered all over East Pakistan, made safe by Pakistan's natural policy of tolerance towards the minorities and given cover by a form of religious or semi-religious protective umbrella. But, all the time they ware engaged in safe anti-state work. Most of the Hindu institutions of this fort as well as their business organisations like the Chittaranjan and Laxminarayan Cotton Mills in Narayangunj were centres from which financial support was extended to the Hindus and Indian agents through profit-making agencies in sophisticated cloth. On the outbreak of the 1965 war, when some of these institutions were seized as "enemy propetry", they showed

negative balances, with even their buildings and other assets mortgaged with banks against profits they made on their hot-cake products.

During the period of political uncertainty and rapid changes in the Government of the province as well as the Centre, these institutions flourished with greater ease and safety. They were used extensively to finance more and more infiltration of the political as well as cultural type, the latter being partly a cover for subversive activity and partly a movement in its own right for subversion with a cultural colour.

The Hindu politicians were a lot more sure of their strength now, than they were ever before. In 1956, the National Assembly had its first session in Dacca. It was in this session that the Hindu member from Comilla, Mr. Dutta, revealed how far the politicians could go for obtaining Hindu support for remaining in political power. Some of the Muslim Leaguers had gone so far as to pledge the type of Constitutional guarentees they were ready to give to the Hindus in exchange for their backing in the House. After a brief but revealing speech by Mr. Dutta, all hell broke loose on the floor of the Assembly, with members accusing each other of the most blatant deeds, threats were bandied and fists held aloft. The session which continued till past 2 a.m. was the most uproarious one till date.

A very interesting constitutional anomaly was revealed at this juncture. At the time of the partition of Bengal, the estimate of the Hindu population was placed at 24 per cent, against which there was equal representation in the provincial and the national

Assemblies of Pakistan. Immediately after independence, there was a gigantic movement of the Hindus from East Pakistan. Some place the number of Hindus who left at 8 million, others at 10 million. But, in spite of this colossal movement of the enfranchised people, the Hindu representation remained at 24 per cent. Many of the Hindu M.P.A.'s and M.N.A.'s were representing people who had since gone to India and were also given representation there as Indian citizens.

On the other hand, the Muslims who migrated from India and settled in East Pakistan were not given any political representation at all.

Now, the population of the Hindus should have beed recorded as sorely depleted, after the large scale movement of the Hindus to India from East Pakistan, which was based on the census of 1941. Surprisingly enough, the Census of 1951 still showed the Hindu population of East Pakistan as 23·2 per cent, and this continued to be so till the separation of East Pakistan.

How did this anomaly come to be ? It could not be said that the 1941 census had been incorrect and had favoured the Muslims, and was corrected in 1951, because, if at all, the census of 1941 could only be favourable to the Hindus, as they were the majority of the enumerators at the time and politically several times more conscious than the Muslims. The only conclusion which can be drawn is that the 1951 and 1961 census figures were rigged and granted Hindus a weightage. This also shows that by 1951, the Hindus had come to have a large say in such matters as influencing the figures of the census.

The Hindu legislators continued to have their families in India, some of them in the armed forces of that country, while they themselves sat continuously in the deliberations for the future of this Muslim state! When Dutta died, it was at his *home* in India, to which he had returned after performing his task of creating as many rifts in the Pakistani politics as he could. The same was the case with many others who even held senior posts not only in the province but also at the Centre. J.P. Mandal was Minister of the Central Government, and soon after his task was done, he left for India. A Deputy Inspector General of Police went over to India in 1951 carrying with him the extant intelligence code at the time, and the same had to be hastily changed.

It seems that the Hindus after the middle fifties had realised that the political uncertainties of Pakistan could not last and something drastic was in the offing. They passed a good deal of the pre-Martial Law period in consolidating their own position and that of the subverteurs. There was also the growing rift between the Chinese and the Moscow factions which weakened the Communist activity in East Pakistan. During the period there was greater attention to the task of cultural subversion. Books by Hindu Bengalis of Calcutta started flooding the East Pakistan markets and were assiduously read by the youth of the province. They were now openly speaking about "Bangladesh" the land of the Bengalis.

The Calcutta books were better printed and low-priced and they were pouring into East Pakistan without any let or hindrance. At the same time, the Indian

High Commission and its branches had set up separate reading rooms which were always crowded by students.

Surprisingly enough, the American information agencies in East Pakistan also began to take more interest in Bengalis as such and playing them up against non-Bengalis and West Pakistanis. In the selection of Foundation or official scholarships, in exchange programmes and in all other ways, they perferred the Bengalis and *underlined* it. This was a clear and open change in their strategy. This helped the subversive activities aimed at driving a wedge between the two wings for the overall weekening of Pakistan.

CHAPTER 8

The Military Regime

It has been stated that the Martial Law introduced a new factor in the politics of the country which made the East Pakistanis feel a fresh sense of deprivation. This assertion is open to doubt, since the first impact of the military take-over did not produce a sense of deprivation among the people of East Pakistan, but one of profound relief. The common man was not aware of the underground goings-on, but he had an instinctive feeling that all was not well and that politics was moving in grooves which were not quite healthy. The activities of the Hindu parliamentarians and legislators were not conducive to the well-being and hopeful future of the state. A palpable uncertainty prevailed everywhere and there was no mental peace in any part of the country. This was not a conscious feeling but an instinctive one. When news reached in the early hours of the morning of October 8, 1958, that the armed forces had stepped in, every one felt that the country had been saved somehow from inevitable disaster.

In spite of all the work of subversion that had been going on from the very day of independence, the heart of the Muslim was still sound so far as the integrity of Pakistan was concerned. He had his grouses, his complaints, his hates and loves, but still he did not wish the country any Harm. The armed forces were still believed to be a national entity and not belonging to any region or affected by its domination. Any appreciation which they received from any source in the world about them, was a matter of pride for any East Pakistani as much as for others. Therefore the suggestion that the coup made the people from the eastern wing more dissatisfied is not quite true.

In fact, it was much later that this feeling was most deliberately injected and the intelligentsia prodded continuously with the propaganda that a domination of the armed forces meant the domination of the West, since there was a greater number of West Pakistanis in the Forces. Even then, the general rank and file of the people refused to accept it. They knew it fully well that the Indian designs on their homeland were not good and the barrier that stood in the way of India getting its way was represented by the armed forces. This fact was fully appreciated by the people as well as the intelligentsia, and the armed forces were held in the same esteem in either of the wings of the country.

The general complaint was against their own politicians. Pakistan had a succession of Prime Ministers from East Pakistan, after the assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan; Khwaja Nazimuddin, Mohammad

Ali Bogra, Husseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, were all from that part. Even Iskander Mirza was a Bengali, hailing from a family of Murshidabad. Choudhry Mohammad Ali, I. I. Chundrigar and Firoz Khan Noon hardly remained Prime Ministers for a collective period of more than a year and a half out of eleven, before Ayub Khan stepped in, and even their regimes were overshadowed by the political personality of Iskandar Mirza. This was an incontrovertible fact which could have given East Pakistan a deal of satisfaction. But it did not. The reason is not in the realities of the situation, but in the extensive whispering propaganda that went on continuously through a lot of *agents provocateur*, though it affected a very small section of the population. It can be considered only because it flowered much later into that hysteria which catapulted a non-descript like Mujib into power.

This was because, excepting Mohammad Ali Bogra, all the others were not considered full Bengalis as they spoke Urdu and even Bogra was bi-lingual. This weighing of individuals on the touchstone of language has been wholly an unknown and unorthodox phenomenon. It was definitely unnatural and was given even a small measure of plausibility on the basis of the alien propaganda among one section of the youth brought up in the shadow of Hindu teachers and mentors.

Even so, Martial Law was treated as a saving grace for the country. The game of political musical chairs had started getting on the nerves of the people. There were all sorts of uncertainties generated by it; prices of essential commodities jumped up and down

with bewildering facility, a lot of smuggling went on across the borders to India, the real problems always went by default. All this was understood by the people, though subconsciously, and the revolutionary change produced only a sense of relief.

The subversive elements went underground right away. They, however, carried on their cultural activities without any let or hindrance and no one was any the wiser about them. And then the honey-moon period of the Martial Law regime was over and the political sails were being unfurled once more and things started cooking.

The cyclone which hit the coastal areas of East Pakistan in 1960 became a very important turning-point in the history of the province. Lieut. General Azam Khan was the Governor and as such he toured the area and set about putting things right. As an "operation commander" he was a most successful man, and it made him very popular with the masses, whose needs and requirements in the wake of the losses suffered through the cyclone, and its concomitant tidal-wave, were satisfied with an extraordinary promptness. Azam Khan went to the villages affected; he wept with the old men who had suffered losses in relatives, he treated them like human beings and par-took of their suffering. He did not repeat the hack-neyed official formula. "We shall look into it," but did so on the spot. They loved him for it. He concluded that the East Pakistanis were simple and good people. Most of them were. But they too had their quota of the selfish breed, one always ready to fish in troubled waters. The generalization and extension of this appre-

ciation, brought forth results which were most dangerous for that wing. He applied his reasoning to politics. He persuaded the Central Government to give East Pakistan what the extremists wanted, to make it happy for all time to come. This was however, a blunder.

The Railway was taken away from the Central administration and provincialised; the P.I.D.C. was bifurcated, and most important of all, it was decided that henceforth East Pakistan civil servants would serve in their home province, excepting for three short years of their apprenticeship period when they had to be posted to West Pakistan. This last was the most far-reaching of all the decisions in its import. All those young men who had been brought up in the school of the Dacca University, impregnated with Bengalism through the flood of Bengali literature which saturated the province during the days of the Awami League, who were taught to hate everything non-Bengali and especially West Pakistan, now got into the civil service and held the fate of their province in their hands.

The change was not a press-button affair. It took time to implement the decisions, and several years passed before any coherent results could be seen in the field. In the meantime, Suhrawardy had expired in Beirut, and Mujib had been left fully in the saddle of the Awami League. During the early sixties, he was backed secretly by a group of officers who advised him on subtle matters of state, drafted his statements and his political programme. Gradually the wine of his own importance began going to his head.

Mujib had been badly mauled by the first Martial

Law regime. He had been prosecuted for acquiring ill-gained wealth. From a lower-middle-class citizen he had bloomed into a wealthy person, owning lands and a cinema hall. These were seized and he was tried for corruption. He did not remain long in jail, and was pulled out soon enough by his supporters in the Government who advised his release. He had come to hate Ayub Khan and his regime and all that it stood for. All his talk of democracy, of freedom of speech and action, meant that he should be allowed freedom to spout his venom against Ayub and the Government. It was difficult to hold him. He made speeches which were flagrant violations of the law, seditious in the extreme. He was once more put into prison, and again released, with a number of helping hands pulling the strings from inside the Government.

And in 1964, Mujib went to India. This visit was allowed to remain a complete secret. If the intelligence services were all that they stood for, this could not have happened. They were manipulated by Mujib's supporters and so the story of the visit did not come out. The objective of the visit was to enlist Indian help for the secession of East Pakistan, and the ground for it was presumed to be ready, with a number of officials in the Government not only in the province but at the Centre also behind him.

In 1964, there were riots in India and a large number of people were thrust into Pakistan, both East and West. Under the camouflage of refugees pouring into the country, many of the first batch of trained infiltrators came in. While in East Pakistan they were a mixed lot of Hindus and Muslims—of course mixed

with genuine refugees—in West Pakistan, they were generally all Muslims. The objective was to confuse the political issues, to carry on a widespread whispering propaganda and to boost up subversion. In West Pakistan, they got into services, in commercial organisations, in Government and semi-Government bodies and entrenched themselves there. In the eastern wing, they not only got into the services, but joined the student organisations, the rapidly growing labour force and spread themselves out in the rural areas. Some of them were followers of Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani and Abul Kalam Azad. Others were fellow-travellers of the Communist Party. Still others were simply on the pay-roll of the Indian Government.

They had hardly gone into full-fledged operations when the relations between Pakistan and India started deteriorating. One of the important reasons why the activities of this fresh influx of infiltrators could not be properly organised was that a fully useful programme for direction and control and to maintain constant contact, had not yet been formulated. After entry into East Pakistan, most of them were absolutely on their own. They could not be properly directed from across the border. As a result, many lost their efficacy, others had to return and yet others remained at a dead end. They could not be directed from Delhi, and there was no proper central organisation in West Bengal which could control them. The civilian agents in business or other organisations in East Pakistan could help and assist but were not a safe factor to give a lead.

Before anything worth while could be devised, war broke out between Pakistan and India, in

September 1965.

East Pakistan could have been plunged into a veritable turmoil straight away if the infiltrators had been properly organised and if Ayub's electrifying speech of September 6, 1965, had not roused the sentiment of the Muslims to an unexpectedly powerful pitch. All the extensive work to wean away the young men from religion, all the propaganda aimed at generating hysteria against fellow Muslims in West Pakistan, seemed to collapse in the face of the appeal made to the people in the name of the *Kalima*. The religious upsurge was so great, and unexpected, that the forces of disruption could not even raise their head.

East Pakistan, as it was revealed later, had been quarantined against an Indian attack under what has been called as the Warsaw understanding, China and America participating. Even if it were not, Indian armed involvement on the borders of West Pakistan was too great to allow her an adventure in the East, with China ready to persue its geese into India from the north. But, most people could not know of it. Aerial combats had been launched from the earliest period of the war, and everyone in the province realised here was a real and open trial of strength, between the Muslim and the Hindu. It had shaped from the very beginning as a sort of a religious war.

It must be put on record that Pakistan's utilisation of the techniques of strategic psychological warfare had proved the most remarkable and the most successful. The failure of India to take Lahore coupled with the story of the "*chota-peg*" the India Chief of Staff had promised in the Lahore Gymkhana, the

story of the green-clad warriors seen on the field of battle, the tales of unknown hands diverting aerial bombs from their targets, the so-called stories of confessions by Indian prisoners-of-war that they saw unknown mail-clad horsemen attacking them and their own bullets just passing through these ghostly warriors without harming them, did wonders with the morale of the people in both the wings. In East Pakistan, the story went rount that all the pigeons who sit on the dome of the mausoleum of Shah Jalal in Sylhet suddenly disappeared on September 6, 1965. It was confirmed by many educated people as well. Gullible persons believed that they were "the angelic warriors" in thrall of the Saint, whe had gone to Lahore to fight for Pakistan!

East Pakistanis are by nature and environment believers in the working of supernatural. The stories were meat and drink for them. They firstly upheld the belief that Pakistan's cause was just, so much so that supernatural powers were out to succour it, then that Pakistan was going to win in any case with the aid of these mystic hosts, and also that it was a sure *jehad*, a war for Islam since all the known and unknown forces had assembled to join it. Irreligiousness and antipathy to the men of religion suddenly disappeared in the flood of enthusiasm, and disruptive forces were suppressed. People were looking around in shady corners for Indian agents and the alertness showed by them was tremendous. If Indian agents had even tried to raise their head at the time, they would have found every individual in that province arraigned against them, till death. That taught India

a lesson—that she could never depend wholly on the dissatisfaction of the East Pakistanis for any action to obtain the secession of the province from Pakistan, in spite of the work done by her ever since independence. Another point was that the propaganda machine had to be well-geared to obstruct successfully any attempt to raise religious fervour among the people when the time came. In later action, India made full amends for these "drawbacks" from her point of view, and circumstances favoured her.

We have, however, gone ahead of our chronology in describing subversive activity in the province. It had been seen how the championship of the point of view presented by a particular section of the East Pakistanis by General Azam Khan, had brought about certain very important change in the administrative arrangements. The argument that it was their due and should have been given to the East Pakistanis cannot hold water if the matter is more fully analysed on the basis of merits. Firstly, the very idea that East Pakistan was deprived of its just rights was wrong, though it had been adopted by politicians under pressure from vocal factions. If Pakistan had been allowed to generate an all-pervading nationalistic spirit, the question of development of all parts on the basis of merit would not have been eschewed. A national spirit was, however, not allowed to grow due to subversive activity and propaganda capitalising on the trends of Pakistan's politics.

Secondly, East Pakistan could not take its place in the economic life of the nation because of its bad start on independence. The educational level of the East Pakis-

tanis was low, the pursuit of productive activity was at the lowest; as we have seen the growers got the least out of the jute and had little capacity to claim more. Investment capacity was nil; not that there was no money available for it, but the people were simply unaware of the intricacies of commercial norms. All these capabilities had to grow along with education and experience, both of which began to be made available on independence.

Thirdly, absorption capacity for development was also very poor. Standards were to rise gradually and with them demand for sophisticated products. East Pakistan could not have made a long jump to prosperity. Whenever troubles hit the province, outside the scope of control of any government, the blame of it was laid squarely on the Central authority in the country. The people were not allowed by alien propaganda to be introspective and to look inwards as to the reasons of their own omission and commission, which could be responsible for the trouble. This ten. dency was allowed to grow to near pathological dimensions. For the East Pakistanis even went so far as to blame the other wing even for attacks of the elements, such as cyclones and tidal bores. If they were not actually held responsible for them, it was not uncommon to grouse about the Government inability to set things right in the shortest possible time.

After Azam Khan, East Pakistan came to have a Governor of its own in the person of Abdul Monem Khan, with more or less a full cast of East Pakistani administrators. Still, the intelligentsia did not stop to grumble. In fact, the tempo of this grew even as a

forced development of the province in all those sectors in which they were backward, was taken in hand. Abdul Momen Khan worked harder than any Governor in the past, with Ayub practically riding his back. Not only the faster growth of the infra-structure was taken in hand, but in order to enable the East Pakistanis to meet it, they were given extra-ordinary opportunities to enter entrepreneural activities. Whole-sale investment on their behalf by the Pakistan Industrial Development Bank, the Pakistan Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation, the Agricultural Development Bank and so on, was provided, and in the course of the decade, many jute mills and other industries belonging to purely East Pakistani enterpreneurs cropped up. Still, the grousing not only did not stop but increased manifold.

While in 1947 East Pakistan did not have even a single pucca baling press—not to speak of a jute mill—by 1970, there were as many as 74 jute mills, consuming more than 4 million bales, and the production from jute was so far variegated as to manufacture not simply gunny and hessian but also carpets and fine cloth. The province was also producing artificial silk yarn from bamboo as well as paper and newsprint, a good deal of which was exported. In indigenous oil-crushing and in vegatable ghee it had acquired complete self-sufficiency and stood on the threshold of meeting its own requirements in sugar and would have also reached the goal in rice in a few years' time, provided the tempo had been mintained.

In the matter of internal trade, East Pakistan exported to the other wing much more than it bought,

and even so it was presumed to have been maintained as a "captive market" for West Pakistan. The pricing of goods from East Pakistan was kept at an artificially high level and the economics of the two wings were complementary. The eastern tea was sold in auctions at the inflated rate of nearly Rs. 4 per pound, while immediately after separation, it could only fetch Re. 1 per pound in the open auctions. The province's paper could only be consumed in the other wing and Bangladesh had a tough time selling it to India or any other buyer. The same was true of its artificial silk yarn, its matches and many other items like ginger, betel-leaf, eggs, poultry, tanned leather, medicinal herbs and so on. On the other hand, East Pakistan's oil-crushing industry was wholly based on oil-seeds from West Pakistan.

But, with the tempo of growth taking wings in East Pakistan, the grumbling instead of subsiding increased. There were many of the "Bengali" officers in the Central Government, who openly and aggressively complained of the "treatment" to their province by that Government. The whole facade of this propaganda was not based on facts but on antipathy and prejudice, which can be traced back to the seeds sown in the earlier period, and an abounding inferiority complex bred during 200 years of Hindu pressures.

A great contribution to this legend of ill-treatment of East Pakistan was made by the East Pakistani journalists who represented West Pakistani papers in that wing. Trained in the school in which they were taught to hate everything West Pakistani, they filed despatch after despatch over the years of fiery speeches

and emotional utterances of their "leaders" couched in a language meant to give that one impression, without ever filing an objective study of the truthful economic activity, and the papers here splashed these stories on their pages in a sort of undisguised glee. These newspapers, for reasons best known to them, did not care to employ any of those newspapermen in the other wing who could give them a clearer and more truthful picture of facts. There is an unfortunate tendency on the part of our press to consider its inherent right of freedom to provide space to every individual who is capable of holding a few ears in the exercise of his demagogic propensities. It does not seem to have either the capacity or the inclinaion to filter all such utterances against its own inalienable yardstick of knowledge of facts. Opinions are usually bandied about freely as a football without their being checked and re-checked against the touchstone of history or reality. This has introduced a very fickle element to our politics. Even half-baked demagogues have had the chance to be catapulted to positions of importance in the national field, to play havoc with the fate of millions through their acquiring an undeserved importance. The press plays an important part in the promotion of such leadership. The West Pakistani Press, thus, repeated the false charge of economic exploitation of the East Pakistanis *ad nauseam* till it became legal tender among the people in this region and a lobby grew here which was sympathetic to Mujib and his henchmen.

During the first half of the Ayub regime, most conveniently separated from the later half by the

incidence of the war with India, Monem Khan devoted himself assiduously to the development of East Pakistan. The Dacca University and the colleges had become the isolated centres of disruptive activity and their cultural assimilation to the cause of Bengali nationalism proceeded apace in popularity, the music and dancing schools drew crowds of young men and girls, many of them the offspring of Government servants holding important posts. The *Bartalla* ("under the oak-tree") in the Dacca University compound was attaining a symbolic place in student activities and a Hindu-owned restaurant became a familiar meeting ground for the subversives.

Monem Khan was fully alive to the political part of these activities, and devised a way to counteract them. He organised a students' organisation of his own to counter these activities. But, this organisation did not operate on the basis of any principles but as an arm of power-politics. Its members received monetary doles from the Government House and other types of patronage as from the Police. As could be expected this went to the heads of the kingpins who eventually began to consider themselves above the law. In course of time they became a postive threat to law and order itself, and contributed in a large measure to the breach of discipline in the University campus, thus playing into the hands of the enemies of the state who could have wanted nothing better. We would revert to this side of things later. Subversive activity had yet to be overhauled on the part of India, soon after the 1965 war, when practically the last chapter of East Pakistan's existence as a part of the single Muslim nation in the sub-continent began to be written.

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CHAPTER 9

Indian Border Security Force

The onset of the 1965 war with India provided a number of object lessons to that country, vis-a-vis Pakistan.

Firstly, that the East Pakistani Muslims had such a deeply ingrained faith in Islam that they could never be depended upon to wage a rebellious war against the Centre absolutely on their own.

Secondly, no programme of infiltration could be successful unless it was managed under the operative command of a source not far from the border to contain the fickleness of emotions of the East Pakistanis and to make rapid changes in strategy if and when necessary.

Thirdly, the total subversion of the province was absolutely necessary if India wanted to achieve a dominant role in the subcontinent, as she could hardly hope to win in a trial of strength on two fronts, with People's China posing a threat from the north. As Pran Chopra has put it, India had been put to a loss of prestige for the second time in five years. She had been forced in 1965 to a virtual draw in the trial of

arms with Pakistan, a country one-tenth in size. Three years previously in 1962, she had to face a rout at the hands of the People's Republic of China. She had to redeem her prestige.

The situation had also drastically changed since the marriage of convenience between Indian capital and commun st know-how. The East Pakistan Communists had divided themselves into two camps on the lines of the communist world itself: the pro-Moscow and the pro-Peking Communists, both unable to see eye to eye with each other on the matter of the province's subversion. The arrangement obtaining previously dissolved itself sometime back. On the other hand there was always a chance of the pro-Chinese Communists in East Pakistan and the Naxalites of West Bengal—which had grown stronger—combining with each other. This combination could prove a serious threat to India's ārtificial unity. For, the lesson of Bengali nationalism which they had been teaching in East Pakistan could very well boomerang on her through the very operations which India had undertaken to speed up her task of East Pakistan's subversion.

A detailed Master Plan was to by-pass dangers drawn up and to achieve the political ends. This took into consideration the following facts :—

(*a*) That the East Pakistanis were, by and large, a very emotional lot and quite capable of being hoodwinked through false and malicious propaganda, as only a few could wait to check up on facts.

(*b*) That the leadership in the province had sprung from the erstwhile middle class have-

nots and it was not difficult to persuade them to take up an extreme attitude, but they were wholly unreliable and could easily change directions with an emotional push.

(*c*) That enough work had already been done in the past to sow the seeds of hatred and discontent against West Pakistan and any further activity in that line was bound to fall on a receptive ground and this work had to be speeded up.

(*d*) That the main factor which would eventually sway the issue consisted of the East Pakistani officials in the Government, who not only represented the major part of the intelligentsia of the province but were also in a position to deliver the goods when the time came.

(*e*) That in the long run outside intervention alone may be necessary to achieve the goals.

Long-range organisation of a plan was extremely difficult. There was not only the matter of holding and directing new converts, the agents and workers to remain in constant contact with their mentors across the border. The Intelligence Department on Lord Sinha Road, Calcutta, had proved its incapacity for this kind of work, and Delhi was too far away for control. The only answer was the creation of a Force very near the border which could act without the loss of time, be in continuous touch with developments.

The answer to this requirement was the Border Defence Force. This ostensibly para military organisation was set-up in 1966, just about the time Shaikh Mujibur Rahman announced his Six-Point programme

for the Constitutional framework of Pakistan, as envisaged by him.

The timing for the establishment of this Force was well chosen. At the outset Shaikh Mujib and his party started a controversy based on accusation and counter-accusation regarding the inedequate defensive arrangements in East Pakistan, to be followed by the famous "six-point formula". The political furore let loose in East Pakistan and in the West Pakistan press was loud enough to drown any actions across the border which could otherwise be explained away as measures to check such illegal operations as smuggling, cattle-lifting and other trans-border crimes.

An Indian apologist, in his book *Dateline Mujibnagar*, has described the role of the Border Security Force in some detail. The officers of the Force, according to him, established liaison with the refugees from East Pakistan after March 25, 1971, arranged propaganda for them, including press conferences, interviews and hand-outs, sent them on to the highest authorities in India and did many other things at the time which could never have been performed by an ordinary border militia or its officers. This shows that the Border Security Force was something more than what it seemed. It was a specially organised body which could work out independently such tasks as infiltration, coordination and financing of saboteurs and even political *agents provocateur*.

For the performance of such tasks, it had to be an extraordinary organ of the civil-cum-milkiary administration, which, as evidence of later activity shows, it was. The remarkable thing about it was that although

it was such a novel force, it could deliver the goods without coming into clash with the local civil administration and other forces which are usually kept in the vicinity of international border areas, while all the time maintaining its incognito.

The political furore which developed in Pakistan's two wings on the publication of the Awami League's Six-Point Programme, the mounting controversies and dissatisfaction against the Ayub regime, followed by the *gherao* and *jalao* movement of 1968-69, kept the people too busy to pay much attention to what was cooking at their elbow, across the border.

Smuggling of men and materials on either side without passport or licence was encouraged to such an extent, at the instance of the Indians, that it made a mockery of the existing laws. There was a regular stream of people coming and going from East Pakistan to Calcutta, Agartala or other points, so much so that others meant for some special purpose could have moved either way without anyone being the wiser. The *modus operandi* was that a man had to pay a small sum of money on his side of the border and he was allowed to trickle through without being molested by the Poliee or the Customs men. The amount paid in one place often looked after the other side as well. For the Pakistanis, it was a good enough business as it went, but for the people on the Indian side it was a little more than that—business as well cover for easy infiltration.

The work of the Border Security Force consisted of the following :

(*a*) Arranging the infiltration of men and women

on the other side of the border for the purpose of collecting intelligence and also mixing up with the social and economic life of the province as East Pakistanis, especially among the students and labour, as a fifth column.

(*b*) Contacting officials of the civil services and the Police, and preparing them for an upsurge against the Central authority in East Pakistan on the problem of independence.

(*c*) Vitiating the intelligence services in East Pakistan. Language was such a barrier for West Pakistanis that in the final analysis all intelligence work had to be done through local personnel and it could not be so difficult to wean the agents and informers away through bribes or on emotional grounds. The antipathy generated through work of the past years had been paying dividends, and migrants with a background of Urdu, who had by now learnt Bengali as the natives, were being discarded as intelligence operatives.

(*d*) Providing financial backing, receiving reports, studying political weather from day to day and keeping in constant touch with the agents and recruits, was a type of work which could be done from very close proximity of the border.

The B.S.F. was carrying out its work quietly all through 1966 and 1967 and by the year 1968 a good deal of advance had been made. The Ayub Government at this stage had announced that as many as 35,000 infiltrators from India were already present in

East Pakistan, a declaration which everyone was inclined to take with a pinch of salt. This casting of doubt on such statements was also the work of the infiltrators themselves or their supporters, who, in their talks and discussions with the people in the cities, scoffed at the idea and painted it with a different political colour, so much so that eventually it was discarded by all and sundry as a tall order.

The Hindus proved an important element in providing a haven to these infiltrators. The total Hindu population of East Pakistan was believed to be nearly 90 lakhs, though official census figures claimed them to be much more (at 23.2 per cent the figure would be much above 1.5 crores). They lived in villages which were usually isolated from Muslim rural population, and no one could recognize any new faces as they trickled in over the years. Making these villages as their base, where they lay low at the outset, they eventually moved on to the cities and took their place in society, as students, as labour, as teachers and in other professions. It was not necessary that they should move about as Hindus. Many of them assumed Muslim names and passed muster as much. This was not at all difficult in conditions which had been evolving in East Pakistan. The society had been developing so fast, adopting new habits and cultural mores that anybody slightly alien could easily get accommodated in it without anyone being the wiser.

His Highness the late Agha Khan III had warned in private counsels that the Hindu minority in East Pakistan would one day prove most dangerous to the

integrity and solidarity of Pakistan. This fear was now proving true, as things worked out in the field. The Hindus had no strong political organisation of their own. Many of them were not even considered politically awake. But in the elections of 1970, every Hindu adult voted. Bhatta charjee, in his *Dateline Mujibnagar* relates how a man on his death-bed was carried to the polling both on a stretcher to cast his vote. This could only have happened in the secure knowledge of the fact that the elections were going to prove fateful, a knowledge which could hardly have come to them minus a political party, minus propaganda, without any speeches or apparent work—through some other element widely present in their midst of which the general public had no knowledge.

The operations of the Border Security Force bore fruit in the first instance in its share of the famous Agartala Conspiracy. It indicated the directions in which the net was being spread by the operatives of this organisation. A member or two of the Civil Service, some ex-servicemen belonging to all the arms: Army, Navy and Air Force, plus the smattering of political figures lurking in the background formed the quota of of those who went for discussion to Agartala. It is quite possible that the involvement of the small fry was deliberately engineered to put the Government on a false scent, and to rig up an emotional ground among the people of East Pakistan against any such charges. If it was, it was a game played most cleverly, but wholly in keeping with the character of the B.S.F.

By 1968, a great deal of work had been done in the field through the activities of the Border Security

Force, a resume of which may be given below :

(*a*) In 1968, a strong group of the Civil Servants in East Pakistan had come together and decided to cast their lot with the Indian scheme. This was much more than the small group of one or two of the Agratala Conspiracy ; in fact, it consisted of a powerful section which could make things move. Forthwith, it set about drawing elements loyal to Pakistan among the civil servants to the Secretariat and posting the secessionists to the districts—a task completed by 1970.

(*b*) The East Pakistanis had nothing but praise for the Ayub Administration as it was during his time that most of the development took place in that province. So, when the agitation against him began in West Pakistan the people were rather bewildered, and took little part in it. It was when the movement had run out in the West that it began in East Pakistan. And when it did, it grew to unexpected and even illogical proportions. Newest and most imaginative techniques were used in the *gherao* and *jalao* agitation, such as people collecting on roof tops during curfew and carrying on their shouting match without breaking the curfew.

Not only was this a period of testing the strength of the infiltrators but also a move to get rid of the tormentor of Mujib and the quashing of the Agartala Case. On all counts the secessionists succeeded while some of the

political parties of West Pakistan who supported Mujib were obviously taken for a ride.

(*c*) Infiltrators, along with locally trained persons, had by this time taken their place at strategic points among the labour and the students, who were utilised most actively during the anti-Ayub agitation. Every institution and every college had its quota of leaders who dominated the activities of the students. In the Institute of Graphic Arts at Dacca, where the average age of the stundents was 18, there was one who was 28 and who controlled the strikes and demonstrations. When the author asked the Principal why this chap was not removed, he informed that any such action would be followed by a protest strike all over the city and even outside, followed by processions and violence even. From the students such demonstrations jumped on to the labour even without any direct connection between the two.

(*d*) By this time also the students, especially of Dacca, were receiving ample money. Shoals of them had taken to wine-bibbing and did bar-hopping on the Airport Road and Eskaton, where a large number of bars had cropped up as a matter of course. Groups of them could be found taking noisy trips to the Narayangunj brothels. Nobody asked them as to where all this money was coming from. Compared to Karachi and Lahore, very little earned cash was floating around in

Dacca, where it was also surprising that prosperity had especially hit only the youth.

It is possible that all this activity was not financed wholly by the Border Security Force. For, it is known that a Super-Power had become interested in the secession of East Pakistan since the 1965 war and was also suspected of throwing a lot of money this way. But, all said and done, this strengthened the hands of the trans-border organisation for subversion. One may also say that with the introduction of this new element in the body-politic of the province, things began to move, bringing subversion to its culminating point, much faster than it would have taken place otherwise.

In March 1971, the activities of the Border Security Force came into a greater focus. They were already prepared to receive the political refugees from East Pakistan after the army action and provide them with a well-oiled machinery for pushing their points of view (masterfully twisted to suit the circumstances, of course) before the world, for which the global propaganda mechanism had been well geared. After this time the B.S.F. operated from an imaginary point which was given the name of "Mujibnagar". It had actually no existence in fact at all and coincided with all points inside India.

All activity on the hot border of East Pakistan and India in February, March and April 1971; was operated by the B.S.F. and this included the transport of an armed force far into East Pakistan, receiving the members of the East Bengal Regiment on the run, spreading rumours inside border areas of East Pakistan, arranging meeting of Awami Leagne MNA's and MLA's and all such work, of which we shall speak later.

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CHAPTER 10

Historical Phenomenon

During the period 1940-47, the sub-continent saw one of the most curious, but true, phenomena of history. It is quite usual for the intellectual class of a community to come out again and again with theories and adumbrations of one kind or the other, propounded, argued out arranged as such and offered for acceptance to the people. But they merely pass by without stirring more than a few chords or finding a broad-based reaction. But suddenly there is one which becomes the rallying point, an idea which captures the imagination of the masses and converts a disorganised crowd into a disciplined people. Such a situation arises when minor events have snowballed into a crisis and stakes become high.

The Muslims of the Indian sub-continent were scattered, disjointed, misled, backward and undeveloped. Efforts to put them on the path of progress could only partially succeed. There were always elements who could be called reactionary in the sense that they interpreted the sense of history in their

own way and thereby mis-directed the course of evolution of their people, not always intentionally but with a false convention. Of this kind were the Ulama, a product of the age of decadence when they had kept the light of Islam burning against onset of alien regimes. They stuck to their guns even when the signs of the times had changed and a new world of science and technology had been let loose on mankind, making their stand an anachronism and behind the times. They opposed the pleas of that towering Muslim personality of the nineteenth century, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, for a slight alteration in the course set for themselves by the community in the sub-continent and insisted on boycott of progress itself.

The Ulama had a great hold on the people, as long as the latter wallowed in ignorance, born as it was of the trust built for themselves at a time when their services were really needed. This hold was exploited to the full and became the despair of many who believed that redemption lay in other directions. Even a giant thinker and seer like Iqbal, who had made it a life's objective to interpret correctly the essentials of Islamic thought as well as the spirit of modern times, felt frustrated to a certain extent.

The crisis in India deepened in the thirties. Coming events were casting their shadows on the psychology of the peoples involved. The British imperialists were heading towards a show-down in Europe as Hitler mounted to power in Germany and bred in his people a psychosis of hatred for the Anglo-Saxons. This clash of imperialisms was bound to pay dividends to the enslaved nations of the East and

ring the bell for their redemption. When the time came, it was for the Muslims of the region also to decide whether they would prefer to be free in their own rights or exchange one imperialism for another, the Hindu for the British.

Not many people consciously allowed this argument to dominate their thoughts. Political maturity was yet far from the living thought of the Muslims. Iqbal's appeal had only touched a frings of the intellectuals—those who had arisen amongst them due to the efforts of Sir Syed. But even so, the curious phenomenon occurred. Mohammad Ali Jinnah rose from amongst them and gave the clarion call to nationhood, and within the short span of a few years, from seven to ten million of the Muslims of the subcontinent rallied to his standard, in the teeth of British and Hindu opposition.

Looking back now with the hindsight of history, how tawdry and how ridiculous appear the arguments of the so-called Muslim nationalists! Liberty did not come to the Indians solely out of agitational politics. It was dictated by other events which had taken place, the after-effects of a most horrible war, which weakened Britain, debilitated her capacities to hold her colonies and possessions. But even appreciating the writing on the wall, and relinquishing the self-styled White Man's Burden, they wanted to keep the Muslims down wherever they could and also leave behind on the pages of history certain vestiges of their own rule, as in the forging of an Indian unity which never was. The Muslims were not in India alone; they were a world community which had once

dominated the globe. To keep them suppressed a little longer could have extended the imperialist domination of the White Man a little more.

That was one big reason which strengthened the crisis for the Muslims in the sub-continent. It also spelt out their own separate importance and identity.

That the ideal of a single nationhood in India was never a reality, it was bred only temporarily under the force of political circumstances with alien tutelage, can easily be understood by looking at the pages of history. Hindu and Muslim interests consciously clashed with each other right upto the time of the 1857 rebellion, as two definite entities struggling for supremacy against each other, and against outside forces. The very Ulama who sought to preach the doctrine of one nation with the Hindus, on the plea of ousting the British, had been in the vanguard of movements like those of Syed Ahmad Barelvi and Shah Ismail Shaheed, of Haji Shariatullah and Titu Mir, ever since the polity of the Muslims went into eclipse in eastern India.

Muslim political interests had to be temporarily submerged under conditions which ensued after 1857. Even then, Sir Syed sought his people to evade politics *for the time being*, and take to re-building themselves on the lines demanded by the modern scientific and technological advancement. It may be pointed out that the influence of Sir Syed and Iqbal on Bengal was only skin-deep. The masses were totally unaffected by their preachings. It was actually the depth of historical realities that forced them to conform most easily to the two-nation theory. The

Muslims of Bengal were, after all, largely a progeny in this land of traders from Arabia, of sufis and savants from all over the Islamic world, and most of the converts native to the area came from Buddhist stock. For two hundred years they were subjected to an inexorable pressure from the Hindus which helped colouring a good deal of their thought, though a great part still remained intact, and it asserted itself when the call came.

It was not, therefore,without reason that in the elections of 1945-46, the Muslim League swept the polls in Bengal and captured all the seats as nowhere else in the whole sub-subcontinent. The appreciation by the Muslims of Bengal of their separate entity as against the Hindus was, therefore,much more deep-rooted than anywhere else in India. If all the Indian machinations in East Pakistan after partition are looked in this context, the result would show very iittle achievement even after over twenty years of continuous work. The field in the province was thought to be fertile, in a continuity of social values ensconced in the false heritage of a Hindu-dominated period of nearly two hundred years. It was utilised as a ready instrument of subversion, through plans and projects expounded by the Communist University of Moscow, in a *marriage de convenience* of Indian capital and leftist manpower. Even so, what the Indians could gain until 1965 war was a sort of upsurge for greater autonomy for the province and nothing more.

After that India came as a wolf in sheep's clothing, her sympathies overflowing for the East Pakis-

tanis for the extraction of the latter's rights from the grip of a strong Pakistani Centre. No doubt this line was very much successful and it worked in weaning away a large section of the people from their moorings. That India was planning much more than merely helping the Bengali Muslims in getting the rights could not even be thought of. Emotion and hatred were used to blind their eyes to the facts of history. The reality that India aimed at the heart of the two-nation theory by rigging up the false gods of Bengali nationalism did not even occur to many of the secessionists.

Above all this secessionist section belonged to a group of intellectuals and civil servants. The common people were left untouched. For them the enemy's prescription was different. It had been preparepared under the supervision of the Border Security Force and consisted of a large number of infiltrators who could mix up with the recalcitrants in the province and create such a reign of terror that all the right-thinking people were bewildered and cowed down.

When the field is taken up by a very noisy minority of violent and hard-hitting goondas, respectable people keep away from the streets and sit at home, neutralized for all practical purposes. This was to be the Indian game. Protected by the civil servants, the rowdy elements took the field, the students were pushed into the indulgence of their vanities and false heroics, losing all their energies and thinking in fissiparious channels; the intelligence system was neutralized through the subversion of police officials

and District Magistrates. The Press was subverted and terrorized into submission.

By 1969, the filed was securely in the hands of subversionists. They had shown their mettle during the *gherao* and *jalao* movement which eventually led to the fall of the Ayub Government and to the catapulting of Yahya Khan into a debased Martial Law. No one had given a thought as to how it happened that the movement only began after the one in West Pakistan based on more realistic political grievances—had nearly spent itself out. Many of the political parties in East Pakistan were not very serious about it and they did not know exactly how it was that it took a most dangerous shape. The opposition, however, felt elated that things were going its way without much effort on its part. Its, ego would not let it believe that it was something other than what its own "remarkable" organisational skill could have brought about.

Some time at this stage the Jamaat-e-Islami was trying to come up in the political field, as a *piece de resistance* to the growing anti-religious feelings amongst the students and a section of the intelligentsia prompted by the Indian agents under the guise of the Awami League. Religion used to play an important part in the life of the East Pakistanis. But, it became the main target of the secessionists since it was on the base of religion that Pakistan was established. As always, the argument was that religion had been used for the exploitation of the people of the eastern wing by the western. But religion was the sole ground for cohesion between the wings, In fact those pleading

for the integrity and solidarity of the country were accused of trying to perpetuate exploitation.

The people at large, especially in the rural areas, were quite untouched by this line of argument. They were still the dumb masses who had little vocal strength. The idea was thoroughly rubbed into the students and the educated class. They had their exceptions. The Jamaat took upon itself to exploit the situation and strengthen its own position. It became target of the subversionists.

The party tried to work among the students especially of the theological madrassahs, of which there were plenty in the province. The Jamiat-e-Tulaba acted as the arm of the Jamaat in the Anglo-Vernacular schools and colleges. Due to a lot of work done during the period 1966 to 1968, they had gained some ground. In 1968 they tried to hold a camp in Dacca. That became signal for attack by the Indian agents and the camp was set fire to.

When the Jamaat tried to hold a meeting in the Paltan Maidan, it was disrupted with violence. While a truckload of sticks, iron rods and other weapons stood in a by-lane off the Jinnah Avenue, a lot of disruptionists entered the maidan and took seat in the front while others surrounded the audience on the fringes. The start of the meeting was the signal for disturbance from the audience itself, with weapons being used freely. The meeting broke up without even a single speaker able to address it.

The Jamaat struggled on in the face of these odds. But it has an organisation which is of the closed-circut type. Its political orthodoxy was no match for the

liberalism of the other organisations operating in the name of religion. But the latter suffered from a lack of a compact organisation and of a cut-and-dried objective before them.

The Convention Muslim League had been swamped by a large body of licence-hunters and permit-seekers, who left it the moment Ayub's ascendancy went into eclipse, leaving an empty bag held by leaders like Fazlul Qadir Choudhry. The Council Muslim League never had any roots in East Pakistan. The Qayyum League was synonymous with the personal followers of Khan Abdus Sabur Khan especially in Khulna. The Pakistan Democratic Party had some support among the students of the Arabic Madrassahs, as a personal influence of people like Maulana Muhammad Siddiq, and among the admirers of Nurul Amin, Maulvi Farid Ahmed and Mahmud Ali, who had played a prominent part in the politics of the country in the past. But all of these parties had hardly any positive practical programme before them, save in terms of idealistic declarations of adherence to democratic norms.

The Awami League had a clear field. All the noise made by the students, the labour, the agents of India, made it an important party. The noise also clouded issues excepting the one of maximum autonomy for East Pakistan and exploitation of the wing by others—and released emotions based on mere hearsay. The Six Points, for example, could hardly be recounted by even some of the top leaders of the League. They were vague and hazy excepting that they were expected somehow to deliver the goods for the people of East Pakistan, as with a magic wand.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's challenge to Shaikh Mujib —to discuss the Six Points in a public debate—was in fact a most thoughtful gimmick which could have brought certain facts before the masses, especially with respect to the effect of the points in destroying the Centre. It was, however, brushed aside as the ravings of a crank. No such debate ever took place and the Six Points remained as hazy as ever for even the educated people of East Pakistan. Nothing could have suited the books of Mujib and his mentors, the Indians. For, they never wished that the fact should ever come home to the general people that the six points programme aimed at the complete dismemberment of Pakistan. The fact seemed to be appreciated by the Yahya Government and it seemed to be taking steps to block the propaganda on the basis, as a clause in the Legal Framework Order shows. But when the time came, surprisingly enough, this was not done. Mujib thereby got a free hand to hookwink the people through fighting the elections on the basis of the Points and later on say that he could not deviate from them as he had received a mandate from the people. This policy of the Yahya Khan regime is one of the conundrums of history which can only be revealed by throwing away the lid from the records of the State, or may be, it has found some place in the famous Hamoodur Rahman Report.

The Mulims of East Pakistan, as it happens, were made the dupes of a nasty politics. They hardly knew what they were actually going for. It provided a clear field to the subversionists who had come to have such a powerful hold on the events, in the absence of

any other effective parties, that they carried the situation in the direction they wanted it to go.

The false and counterfeit "exploitation" bogey had been so deeply cultivated that even the political parties loyal to the State were carried away by it. Some of them probably knew differently in their heart of hearts, but they utilised it as it had come to have a mass appeal. Anybody saying anything different ran the risk of immediately being dubbed as a stooge of the exploiters and an enemy of the people. In this regard at least all of them joined the chorus, further strengthening the hands of the Awami League.

The period of the Second Martial Law prior to the permission of political activities, was a period of lull before the storm. Suprisingly enough, the Awami League was still not considered a party working against the interests of the integrity of the country, and the other political parties failed to close up their ranks in the face of a common enemy. During this period of lull, while the Awami League and the Indian agents worked continuously to make their secret organisation thoroughly strong and fool-proof, the others went on indulging in individual bickerings. This brings us to the last but one phase of the drama of subversion in East Pakistan.

any other effective parties, that they carried the situation in the direction they wanted it to go.

The false and counterfeit "exploitation" bogey had been so deeply cultivated that even the political parties loyal to the State were carried away by it. Some of them, probably, knew differently in their heart of hearts, but they utilised it as it had come to have a mass appeal. Anybody saying anything different ran the risk of immediately being dubbed as a stooge of the exploiters and an enemy of the people. In this regard at least all of them joined the chorus, further strengthening the hands of the Awami League.

The period of the Second Martial Law prior to the permission of political activities was a period of lull before the storm. Surprisingly enough, the Awami League was still not considered a party working against the interests of the integrity of the country, and the other political parties failed to close up their ranks in the face of a common enemy. During this period of lull, while the Awami League and the Indian agents worked continuously to make their secret organisation thoroughly strong and fool-proof, the others went on indulging in individual bickerings. This brings us to the last but one phase of the drama of subversion in East Pakistan.

CHAPTER 11

The Climax

Before the Yahya regime permitted a recommencement of political activity in the province, the Legal Framework Order was promulgated, to maintain the proprieties and orderliness during the course of electioneering. The date of the polls was fixed sometime in September 1970.

All the political parties were asked to conform to the basic objectives of Pakistan, that is, adherence to the goal of making Pakistan a truly Islamic state. The other very important clause of the Legal Framework was that no political party was to be allowed to propagate any political principle or programme which was considered to be against the integrity and solidarity of the state.

Now why was this clause inserted? Against whom was it aimed at?

No political party Save one had any aim and object which could by a stretch of imagination be termed to at hit the integrity and the solidarity of the State of Pakistan. Only the Six Points Programme adopted by the

Awami League, and considered to be an article of faith by the Party, did militate against the solidarity of the state. It was obvious, therefore, that the clause aimed at the Awami League objectives in that regard.

The Six Points envisaged an extremely weak Centre without any powers of taxation but with responsibility for the defence of the country. The provinces were to have separate currencies of their own, but if this was not considered feasible, a single currency but separate accounts for each province. Even the bifurcation of foreign relations was envisaged, each province maintaining its own trade commissioners abroad. Foreign aid was also to be appropriated by the provinces. On the face of it, the Programme aimed at dealing a fatal blow on the Centre and, therefore, was against the integrity and solidarity of the nation.

But in spite of the categorical ban on the propaganda of these principles, when the Awami League began its election campaign, nothing was done to stop it. The followers of Shaikh Mujib—actually all the vast forces of subversion which had been martialled in East Pakistan during the last few years—were let loose amongst the people for raising a Six-Point hysteria. The technique was not to explain the Six Points and their political implications vis-a-vis provincial autonomy, but to dilate most expansively on the causes, real or imaginary, which could be construed to indicate that there has been an out-of-hand exploitation of East Pakistan at the hands of the West, and on that basis to breed hatred. In fact, it was so manipulated that the actual body of the six-point programme never came before the public.

Before the Framework Order was promulgated, two important actions were taken by the Yahya regime. The first was the institution of the principle of one-man-one vote and the second was the dismemberment of One Unit in West Pakistan. General Yahya stated that this was done on the advice of politicians with whom he had had parleys before announcing the changes.

The 1956 Constitution had adumbrated the principle of parity between wings, and as a corollary to it, West Pakistan had been brought together under a single provincial Government. It was believed on the one hand that the artifical lines of provincial demarcation which had been drawn by the British Govern-to suit their own requirements, hardly conformed to any definite racial or linguistic units but had come to instigate a type of unhealthy jealously of one region by the other. On the other, there was the question of balance between East and West Pakistan. These two broad arguments were utilised to set up the One-Unit. Now Yahya Khan was told, by some politicians that this had resulted, in actual practice, by a domination by the Punjabi element over the other backward regions of West Pakistan. Not only for that but with the object of restoring a sense of justice among the East Pakistanis, the parity principle of the 1956 Constitution was done away with.

The general theme of Shaikh Maujib's election campagin was the exploitation of East Pakistan by West Pakistan, the demand for complete political autonomy of the provinces as adumbrated in his Six Points. The fact that the principle of one-man-one-

vote provided East Pakistan an edge over West on the basis of population was not mentioned. The disposition of seats in the House which was to act as the Constituent Assembly first and then a Parliament (after the Constitution had been framed) was to be such that out of a total 313 seats, 169 were to go to East Pakistan and 144 to the four provinces of West Pakistan put together. These included 7 women's seats for the East and 6 for the Western provinces. Thus East Pakistan was to have a permanent majority of 25.

Thus, with a definite majority of seats of the East Pakistanis at the Centre, a stronger Central Government would have proved a better gimmick for them to undo all the alleged injustices done to them in the past. It was generally accepted that East Pakistan by virtue of its greater number of seats would henceforth dominate the Parliament. The propagation of Six Points which envisaged a weak Centre or no Centre at all for that matter, could hardly be understood. At the time it was only considered an electoral stunt and nothing more.

But, with the propagation of Six Points went a hate campaign against the West and as time rolled by a hysterical situation developed. As soon as the ban on political activity was lifted, up went a terrible noise all over the province, endlessly repeating wild tales of discrimination and injustice. Along with the Six Points of the Awami League were the 11 points of the Students wing of the Party, which included five more "demands" beyond the inclusion of the Six Points.

With a plan wholly to the advantage of East Pakistan, the country was going to polls and the matter had

to rest with the public. But, quite early in the campaign, the "Mukti Bahini" was formed by the Awami Leaguers. "Mukti Bahini" means an "army of freedom." It could have been a trained force of the youth to go to the people and work among them for the success of their political party at the polls. But it was more than that. In cities and towns and in the countryside, young men were regularly drilled in military formations, using sticks in place of rifles. This was an "army" not to work at the polls, but to fight when the time came. But to fight against whom? Nobody stayed on to think, much less the Government who took it just as an instance of political swashbuckling. It is true, such haphazardly-trained "armies" are hardly effective against a hardy and professional force today. But, moves of this kind prove an effective way to give a psychological boost against a given "enemy" by mobilizing their emotions. On the other hand, they were utilised as a source of innumerable pin-pricks to harass the armed forces in East Pakistan in 1971.

In July, retired Lieutenant Colonel of the Pakistan Army, Sylhet-born, Aligarh educated, Mohammad Ataul Ghani Usmani, took the salute of the "Mukti Bahini", on the steps of the so-called Shaheed Minar outside the Dacca Medical College Hostels. The hate-campaign, started by Indian agents as far back as 1947-48 had now consolidated into full bloom.

During this time batches of young men, mostly students, were also being taken out of the country and given training in the use of real arms, at Dehra Dun, at Poona and other points in India, but as far away

from East Pakistan as possible, especially in places where there was a very poor Muslim population. After the fall of East Pakistan, the author met a number of such former trainees.

The defection of Colonel Usmani to the Awami League was a peculiar happening which requires special consideration, as a sample of some of the most foolish localised relationships which developed into serious trouble-spots. Usmani was for six years a class-fellow of the author at the Aligarh Muslim University. Son of a member of the udiciary, he was a most honest and upright young man with a liking for the army from the outset. Short in stature and thin, he tried to make up with a real soldierly mien. Later, after joining the armed forces, he tried to make up for his small size with equally big moustaches. What I heard about him from soldiers under his command, however, was that he was one of the most strict and efficient officers. He was a Lieutenant Colonel in 1953 when I met him after Aligarh, and he was still a Lieutenant Colonel when he retired in the later sixties. Somewhere he had been given a raw deal in the matter of promotions. He carried a grouse to his home and when the time came he joined the forces which were preparing to rebel against the army which failed to appreciate him.

It is known that he did not support the faction of the Awami League which wanted Indian assistance all the way. But nevertheless he did accept it when the time came as there was no other alternative. Due to a personal grudge which he carried against the Pakistan Army General Staff, he threw his hand for the

consolidation of political activity which aimed at secession, even though it was against the honest grain of the larger section of the East Pakistanis who wanted autonomy and not secession. They were clearly befooled by their leaders to become victims of the hymn of hate which had persistently been allowed to continue in that province.

In the autumn ot 1970, Mujib went on tour of the province, He was everywhere taken out in processions which could match the official receptions to a seated Prime Minister or President. Enormous sums of money were spent on these. Thousands of people were paid cash to attend the meetings and join the long trails which followed him. This was openly done. The Government must have been aware of the source of such colossal sums which were being spent like water at all places. But nothing was done to check up on them. Probably the time had passed to do that. For, any step taken at the time against Mujib might immediately have been twisted to mean something different.

According to modest estimates, Mujib's visit to each city cost the Awami League no less than a million rupees. The whole electioneering campaign must have required several crores! We know that some of the industrialists and businessmen with headquarters in Karachi gave him large sums as "donations" against the day when he may come to power. But even so, Pakistani businessmen could not have contributed too largely to the Awami League. While Mujib's own tour expenditure mounted to several crores of rupees, there were innumerable other organisational expenses to be counted. All this expense could not have been

possible simply through private contributions from businessmen and industrialists.

Where was this money coming from? India has been named as one source. But even India could not have dumped such astronomical sums into the melee, even though her target seemed to be close at hand. It has been surmised that somewhere in the middle sixties, the Americans had decided to throw in their support to Mujib. There are various stories in connection with this theory. One of them is that with the war approaching a close in Viet Nam, Americans wanted some other suitable base in South East Asia where they could keep their highly sophisticated weapons, to continue playing the policeman in this region. A suggestion to Pakistan had been brushed aside by the Ayub Government. That could be construed as twisting Uncle Son's moustaches.

Pakistan as it was made up, had a great stake in the Middle East. Since 1966 it was inclining more and more towards in active, though undeclared and unclaimed, leadership of the Islamic world, determined to make it strong and powerful. The 1965 war and the notices published in the world press by military experts brought out the Pakistani armed forces as some of the best-trained professional units on the globe and there was a scramble for utilising Pakistan's methods of training and its men, especially in the Arab world. This was contrary to the American interests in this region. Pakistan was at the time a bulwark against Communism in the area and it was not in U.S. interests to break it, but just to weaken it. This could best be performed by a surgical operation,

the break away of its eastern province.

America, however, did not look with favour on Indian interference in the region. For some time, open and unchallenged research was being carried out by Harvard scholars whether East Pakistan could survive as an independent nation or not, economically and politically. It had been suggested that it could, based on statistics but without taking into account the emotional and psychological content which is usually an important adjunct in national evolution. I speak of the psychological content with full deliberation as well as appreciation of the facts after the action. For, in March 1971, a fool proof military strategy in the province completely failed because of this very psychological content. The East Pakistani (Bengali Muslim) forces at some places could not stand up against less than one-tenth of their number due to the guilty feeling that they were willy-nilly taking part in a fratricidal war. The facts would, however, be mentioned later.

In 1965, when the Americans had wanted the defeat of Pakistan at the hands of India, the same error was most prominent. Neither India nor the Americans had counted against the upsurge of that unknown emotional quantity, the Islamic inner urge to a holy war or *jehad* which transformed an otherwise apparently corrupt people into a determined power which could not be laid low. But having come to learn of this unknown factor, they had made up their mind to soften the people through a weakening of the Islamic character. India had, however, some appreciation of this factor through a thousand years of

their history. They had already been carrying on this "softening" process since partition of the sub-continent had been accepted against their will.

The American policy was to join hands with India in the intensification of this process and then to bring up the other factor for which it had been working, the rebel military and police force. An independent but weak and non-self-reliant East Pakistan could be a happy hunting-ground for America, who needed a stooge in this region.

Shaikh Mujib and his henchmen, who had been working for India since 1948, took the American interest as God-sent, but they remained inclined towards India, though accepting the financial aid from the United States.

To carry into effect the American plans the success of the Awami League at the polls was most essential and it is surmised American diplomatic pressure forced Yahya not to bring into motion that part of the Legal Framework Order which banned any propaganda which was against the integrity of the State, when Awamis launched their campaign on the basis of Six Points. Another suggestion is that the Awami League in secret parleys, had offered Yahya the Presidentship of Pakistan if the Awami League was returned to power in an overwhelming majority. Orders were, therefore, issued to the Martial Law authorities not to obstruct their campaign in any manner.

In September 1970, the southern regions of East Pakistan were hit by a cyclone. For two days no one even in that province knew of the damage caused by the storm and the accompanying tidal bore. On the

third day information began to trickle through. The storm was, however, not of such devastating impact as to be termed a calamity. But, during the two days that elapsed, the officials got a chance to make propaganda capital out of it. It was due to their briefing that the newspapers in East Pakistan suddenly erupted with banner headlines giving concocted tales of the havoc, which were contrary to the information collected by the Central Government. In spite of it, however, the armed forces were rushed to the affected area to carry out the relief work. As lurid tales of the devastation appeared in the local press, the elections had to be postponed till December.

Mujib straight away grasped the opportunity. He accused the Central Government of trying to put off elections to harm the Awami League interests, while at the same time abusing the people of West Pakistan for their callousness in not rushing immediately to the aid of the East Pakistanis. The first accusation had hardly any merit in it, as the Central Government would have been accused of getting on with elections even when the citizens of the province were faced with an unparallelled devastation if they were not postponed, and had thus to take the attack in either case. The charge against the West Pakistanis was purely a political instrument to intensify the hatred between the people of the two wings.

The foreign press inimical to this country, took their cue and also came out with lurid stories of the vast damage caused by the cyclone to the people in the southern districts. Some of the European countries sent their own parties to do relief work, which was not

at all necessary. These teams, however, helped in the dissemination of concocted stories of callousness against the armed forces of Pakistan, a canard which could not have borne a minute's examination.

The affected areas included parts of the District of Barisal and Noakhali, including the island of Hatiya and Sandwip. As soon as the hue and cry about the enormous relief operations and the interest of some of the foreign countries became public knowledge, hordes of beggars who, as a rule, floated in the big cities and towns of Chittagong, Dacca, Comilla and Faridpur all the time, suddenly disappeared from these places and flocked into the affected areas. Whether this was a natural desire on their part to partake of free gifts being distributed in the area or the influx was deliberately engineered cannot be stated with certainty. But, either way, the impact of a large population of homeless beggarly have-nots available in the cyclone-hit area made foreigners believe were affected by the havoc.

Surprisingly enough, the Central Government during all this time was either oblivious of what was actually going on, or did not dare to take any action against the officials or newspapers who were indulging in false propaganda. At the same time, the information channels of the Government proved wholly inadequate to meet the challenge of the situation. The Government was all the time on the defensive, but the defence was no match for the enormously vocal and overwhelming campaign launched by the East Pakistani, Indian and foreign press.

For the first time during this period the Awami

League began preaching openly against the armed forces. No country can afford aspersions being cast on its armed forces for fear of striking on the morale of these defenders of the borders against an external enemy. But, to secessionists this was a most important gimmick in the persuit of their objectives. The armed forces, because of their predominantly West Pakistani manpower, had to be painted before the people of East Pakistan and the world as an "army of occupation". This was done most freely, and most imaginative stories of callousness, lack of human feelings and the absence of the human kindness among the forces were painted and whispered all over East Pakistan and published in despatches to the foreign newspapers.

It is rather surprising that even this did not open the eyes of the Yahya regime, who should have realised that this attitude was tantamount to anti-state activity and the objective obviously was to denounce the Central Government who were the employers of the armed forces, while openly arousing mass sentiments against West Pakistan. No curbs were placed on this propaganda aud probably Yahya still believed that the promise of Pakistan's Presidentship would be kept.

Three months later when the elections were actually held, the military, the Police and even some of the effective auxiliary forces were absent from the polling booths in the cities or villages. The only "force" to maintain peace which could be seen were a few "Mujahids"—a bare-handed body of volunteers who had been recruited, for all it is known, from

amongst the Awami Leaguers and Indian agents who were crowding everywhere. Awami League "camps" were pitched in close proximity to the booths and a crowd was invariably present in these to threaten and cow down the electors. At the same time, bogus vote-casting was the order of the day, especially among the women, where women polling agents and even returning officers put the seal against the Awami League candidates, or directed it to be done so.

As soon as the information that there was no body of regular force to watch over the voting was taken back to the homes of the voters, many who were opposed to the Awami League did not dare come out to use their franchise. On the other hand, nothing was done to apprehend those who were casting bogus votes. The author of this book himself saw that his vote was cast by a 19-year old boy and when he called the attention of the Returning Officer, no move whatsoever was made although the bogus voter was right there. Nor could the author cast his vote after the fact had been proved on the spot due to discrepancies in age. He also knew a large number of persons whose vote had already been cast even before they reached the booth.

In West Pakistan, it is stated, the elections were quite fair, and the people of this region just do not wish to give credence to the facts of rigging in East Pakistan. The same people in 1977 made a hue and cry about "rigging" in the elections held in March. It proves that the people of West Pakistan (now Pakistan) do little of their own fact-finding, but are given to swallowing hook, line and sinker, what

the foreign propaganda machines are prone to dish out to them.

The results of the 1970 elections in East Pakistan was a foregone conclusion. The Awami League won hands down, even beyond its own expectations. The dimensions of the triumph itself proved that the elections could not have been fair, as no party ever has won the way Awami League won, capturing 160 seats out of 162, including, of course, the same person winning from several places, and the polling in cyclone-affected areas which was held in January 1971.

The results of the polls, however, opened new avenues of thought, and it was for a time believed that the Awami League may not go for breaking the country, after all. But these were vain hopes, as it provided a chance to the agents of India to achieve their objective—a wish which had been like a fever with them since they had to agree to the cutting up of Bharat-mata in 1947.

CHAPTER 12

The Rebellion

The result of the elections threw up altogether a new political situation in the country. The Awami League had captured 160 seats out of 300, and the People's Party 88. Both of these parties were restricted to either of the wings of Pakistan, and neither had a single seat in the other. This created an obvious situation of confrontation between the two parts where two distinct parties stood face to face against each other.

In the Parliament of the country, this could have far-reaching effects; with the Awami League from East Pakistan in power and the Pakistan People's Party in the Opposition. But, before the House could start acting as the Parliament, it had to thrash out a Constitution for the country. The Awami League was in a clear majority, and the Legal Framework Order did not mention whether the Constitution should be passed by a two-thirds majority or a simple one. In fact, the House itself had to decide this point, and it was obvious it would be decided the way the Awami League

willed it.

Even if two-thirds majority was called for, the Awami League had to get only 39 votes from West Pakistan, and those could be provided by the opponents of the Pakistan People's Party, who had 50 votes in hand. Looking at things from the hindsight of history, it is possible this could have happened and some of the parties could have ganged up to support the Awami League.

But, at the same time, the election results had provided a golden opportunity to the Awami League to undo all the so-called injustices done to East Pakistan during the previous twenty-three years. Many people thought that Shaikh Mujib would certainly utilise the situation for this very purpose by forming the Government. Speculations were ripe that the Federal capital would be shifted to East Pakistan and so would be the Naval Headquarters. There would be some difficulty in having the army and air force headquarters in that wing, but even that could be done.

In short, it was on the cards that the destiny of Pakistan lay in the hands of Mujib, who was so obviously the Prime Minister-designate of Pakistan.

When, however, Mujib came out in January with the assertion that he would push through a constitution based on his Six Points, it was a surprise to everybody. He was, it could be seen, out to demolish the Centre where he and his party held the strings of power! It was fantastic and unbelievable, only as long as you did not see Mujib in his real colours. As a stooge of India and the other powers who did not like Pakistan to stay, this was a rare opportunity to break it up. For, the

Six Points envisaged so weak a Centre that it could be said to be no Centre at all, and the *real power went to the provinces*, of which now there were four in West Pakistan.

Formerly, when there were only two provinces in the country, Six Points would have worked to separate them, or the two wings. But with the break-up of the One Unit, Six Points were to deal a death-blow to West Pakistan also, breaking it up into four, more or less independent, entities.

This speaks volumes for the thoughtlessness of our politicians and of Yahya Khan, who had broken up the One Unit while at the same time providing for one-man-one-vote, giving East Pakistan the deciding vote on Pakistan's destiny. But, East Pakistan as an entity was never against the unity and intergrity of the country as a whole. In spite of the propaganda which was being carried on by India and the disruptionists in that wing, the majority of the people, while favouring a good deal of autonomy, were not in favour of a break-up of the country. On the one hand, the Awami League claimed to stand for autonomy, on the other it made enormous noise (along with the infiltrators) to cloud the real issues and not allow the people to realise the direction towards which politics was heading.

As a matter of fact, the majority of the people of East Pakistan, who had pushed the Awami League to the position it now held as a result of the elections consisted of a minority among Muslims, plus the Hindus. As we have analysed in another part of this work, Mujib and his henchmen were catapulted to their unenviable position by only about 8 per cent of

the Muslim and 100 per cent of the Hindu votes. Thus, while in the making of Pakistan, the *Muslim votes* were the main deciding factor, in breaking it, it was the *Hindu votes* in East Pakistan which sealed the issue.

The situation was rather peculiar. The voting figures show that Mujib did not have the backing of the people, and certainly not the majority of the Muslims, but rather a very small minority. But, the number of seats captured gave altogether a different picture. This was one of the biggest anomalies of the parliamentary system, which had not only been accepted by the people of Pakistan but had actually been pressed for by a large number of politicians while opposing what they called the dictatorship of Ayub Khan and his presidential system. Mujib spoke with this parliamentary authority on behalf of the 70 million people of East Pakistan, when he said that he had received a mandate from the people to make the Constitution on the basis of Six Points. In fact the mandate was from only 21 million out of 70. Besides, it was immaterial if 99 per cent of the educated classes and 100 per cent of the masses did not understand what Six Points meant and what impact there was likely to be on Pakistan of such a Constitution!

It was obvious that the Awami League had, during the period of one month of absolute calm throughout the country, received its directions from abroad, as to the stand to be taken by it. India had the most glowing opportunity to fulfil her aspirations of the past, in one stroke, and she could hardly let it go. The same can be said of the Zionists, who owned the biggest propaganda machine in the world and who were

in a position to influence—and even coerce—Governments of some of the greatest Powers of the world.

If, as Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had suggested much earlier, the Six Points had been publicly debated, their nefarious implications could have been clearer to the people of East Pakistan. In one of his speeches in February, Bhutto stated :

> "I have often said in my speeches, ever since the Six Points were presented at the Lahore conference of opposition parties in 1966 that these points should be debated, but even at the National Conference itself leaders of West Pakistan did not debate them. They rejected any political dialogue on the Six Points. . . I had told them that any delay in considering these questions will further complicate the problem. I threw a challenge to Mujib for a public debate . . . ."

The Six Points had not been debated; people knew little of them. But, during the elections they were talked about by the Awami League—not explained—as the magic wand to end all the troubles of East Pakistan, real or imaginary. And now Mujib was asserting that he had received a mandate from the people to frame the Constitution of Pakistan on their basis.

West Pakistan had many problems to face due to this. It was not simply a question of safeguarding the economic base of that wing; it was a matter to save it from a break-up into four parts. First it was to discuss the matter with Mujib and to ask him to relinquish his stand. This he refused to do. The other alternative was to make a compromise to accept some of the

Six Points and not all, to maintain the integrity of the country and the Centre.

The only person who could speak for West Pakistan was Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. He was the leader of the largest political party after the Awami League in the country, certainly the largest in West Pakistan. Also, as he said in one of his speeches, he had a clear majority in the Punjab and Sind, and Punjab was the key to the nation. It was the biggest province and it had the largest number of its manpower in the armed forces. Besides, none of the other parties could be wholly relied upon to conserve the nation's integrity. Bhutto said on February 22, 1971 :

> "When I went to East Pakistan, I told Mr. Mujib that it was his Awami League that had been elected on Six Points, not the People's Party. I told him that we had been elected on the basis of our stand on revolutionary changes in the economic system and on evolving an independent foreign policy, that we would try our utmost to co-operate with him and come as close to the Awami League as possible. However, there was a limit. If we went too far *it would lead the country to disaster* . . If all of us join hands there is no reason why we should not be able to find this solution."

This was the path of compromise. It was rejected by Mujib.

In the meantime, things had been moving in East Pakistan. General Yahya had gone there and discussed the programme of Mujib with him. It must have been obvious to him that the determination of the Awami League to frame the Constitution on the

basis of Six Points would mean the dismemberment of Pakistan. Leaders from West Pakistan also visited Dacca and tried to argue with Mujib, who remained adamant.

In the meantime, the East Pakistanis were being inflamed. The Awami League riff-raffs had come out on the streets and they could not allow any dissident voice to be raised. Now they had the backing of the results of the elections, they were not to be obstructed by the Police or the army. The latter was already being named as the "army of occupation"—the army which had for twenty-three years defended East Pakistan borders against the incursions of India. Hatred was spread against it, and opportunity was allowed to slip to bring about a clash between civillians and soldiers. The result was the voice of the real majority was suppressed. Leaders of the other political parties, such as the Muslim League, the Pakistan Democratic Party and the Jamaat-e-Islami could not but echo the demand of the Awami League that it should be allowed to make the Constitution on the basis of Six Points. If not in so many words, the statements of these asserted that "Bengalis" could not be suppressed and "their *rights* should be handed over". (Cf. statement of Jamaat-e-Islami's Ghulam Azam published on March 14, 1971).

The matter should have rested with the leaders and triangular discussions were indicated between the leaders of West Pakistan, the Awami League and the Martial Law authorities led by General Yahya Khan. But even before the matter was taken up among these, it had gone to the streets of East Pakistan. It was

obvious that Mujib expected resistance to his Six Points now he was in a position to implement them, and so he was creating a situation which would make any further move to keep the integrity of the country intact an impossibility.

As early as January, 1971, offices sprouted all over the province where a fresh recruitment drive was instituted to the "Mukti Bahini". Many of the Hindus who had been lying low, came out into the open, manned these offices and trained recruits everywhere. No attempt was made by the civil authorities to check the growth of this hysteria. As stated before, most of the officials had already thrown their lot with the secessionists and assisted the Awami League in achieving the victory it got at the polls. It was apparent to impartial observers that Pakistan's integrity could only be kept by the force of arms and no other way.

The Awami League and its mentors, on the other hand, planned to weaken the hitting capability of the armed forces in the province. Certain events took place at this stage which point to this.

On January 31, an Indian Airlines plane was hijacked during its flight from Srinagar, and taken to Lahore, and there destroyed giving India the excuse to cancel overflights of the Pakistan International Airlines from Karachi to Dacca. At the same time, the Posts and Telegraph workers in the province went on a well-timed strike. The intelligence system had been weakened and no information was being correctly reported to the Central Government. The non-Bengalis and the West Pakistanis were also blocked through the suspension of postal activities in sending

factual reports of happenings, within the province or between wings.

This was the signal for the entry of arms into East Pakistan from various sources on a large scale. The enormous quantity of weapons and ammunition which came out on March 25 and was distributed amongst the public could only have been brought in over a long period of time. They were actually being smuggled over the border throughout the whole of February and right upto March 25.

The hysteria which was shown by the demonstrators, the hatred preached aganist the army, clashes which occured with the soldiers, forcing most of them to remain in the barracks, were in fact moves calculated to cover the gun-running on a vast scale unmolested, along with other political advantages gained thereby by the Awami League.

In January, the author was told by an Awami Leaguer who had been involved in the Agartala Conspiracy case that Yahya would not dare to try to suppress the organisation by force, but if he did, he said, they were fully prepared for it. This indicates that preparations had been afoot since before that for an armed uprising. One can, however, not say when the Bengali elements in the forces were persuaded to mutiny. There is enough evidence to prove that only some of the officers in key positions had been so involved and the rank and file did not know of it till the last minute.

By February it was evident that Mujib would not listen to reason and agree to deviate from the position taken by him with regard to framing the

Constitution on the basis of Six Points. He knew perfectly well that West Pakistan leaders, especially Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, would never agree to that, and so all his utterances of this period were aimed at catching the attention of the world who could not know the underground activities that were going on all this time.

The National Assembly had been called on February 15. While Bhutto insisted that an agreement should be arrived at before the House assembled and outside it, Mujib clamoured for the sessions. Bhutto explained his stand in the following words:

> "I know some people are demanding that we should explain our stand in the National Assembly in accordance with established democratic principles. True, a constitution is framed after debate and discussion in the Assembly, but we are faced with a peculiar situation. It would have been a different matter were a Constituent Assembly already in existence. Since the Awami League calls the Six Points the basis of the constitution, no room is left for any compromise whatsoever on that stand. On top of it, a time limit of 120 days has been fixed for constitution making. It would not be helpful if a deadlock was created in the Assembly on account of these two factors. Is it not better not to hold the National Assembly session until these problems are resolved outside the Assembly?"

It is clear that Bhutto was afraid—and rightly so—that if the Assembly met, the Awami League would push through an already drafted constitution on the basis of Six Points and even if the representa-

tives of West Pakistan walked out of it, it would be taken to have been passed by a majority. That would have created a most peculiar situation. The passing of the constitution for the whole country by the majority party which represented East Pakistan only and opposed by the representatives of West Pakistan—at least the majority of them would—have created a deadlock which, Bhutto feared, would not have been resolved in 120 days, the maximum time given for making the constitution by the Legal Framework Order. Yahya was not prepared to relax the time-limit.

Bhutto's suspicions of Yahya Khan's sincerity in saving the situation, he put into words as follows:

> "The President of Pakistan went to Dacca and announced that Mujib would be the Prime Minister of the country. Both said that they had satisfactory talks, so it was presumed that the constitution had virtually been framed".

He was afraid that the Awami Leage had done so on the basis of Six Points and Yahya Khan had agreed. This would have virtually spelt out the disintegration of West Pakistan as well.

It is very surprising that some of the political leaders of West Pakistan could not understand this clear-cut state of affairs. They insisted that Bhutto should agree to attend the sessions of the National Assembly and have his say in the House. Either they were blind to the situation vis-a-vis the stand of Mujib, along with the suspicion that he was playing into the hands of outside interests, or they were themselves supporting the dismemberment of Pakistan.

It is surprising that after all that happened in East Pakistan before and after March 25 1971, there are some political parties who have been accusing Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto of being responsible for the dismemberment of Pakistan. So far as East Pakistan was concerned, it was a foregone conclusion that it would have separated under Mujib's leadership. The question was of the dismemberment of West Pakistan. By refusing to sit in the Constituent Assembly until an agreement had been arrived at ouside the house, Bhutto at least saved West Pakistan from distntegration. The credit must go to him, without there being two opinions about it.

It is in this context that we should view the postponement of the Assembly from its second date of March 3, 1971. It was now nearly a month since India had banned overflights over its territory and as a result the quick transfer of military personnel from West to East Pakistan became expensive if not difficult. The flights had to go round Colombo and the distance was tripled. The strike of the postal department, which spread over the whole of February, left only communication through telegraph and telephone which was open and could easily be tapped, with Indian and Awami League agents sitting at key-pionts—an activity which had been going on since 1968 and had by now reached its culmination. Arrangements of posting district, civil and police officials had been completed, and the flow of intelligence from the mofussil areas had been obstructed; only information drafted to suit the needs of the secessionists was allowed to flow upward.

There were only two snags left: the non-Bengalis who had remained completely loyal to the Pakistan ideology and some sections of the military intelligence. The latter were still operating in mixed groups of Bengalis and non-Bangalis, since the language barrier had to be overcome. As soon as the postponement of the Assembly was annouced on March 1, attacks on non-Bengalis who were out of their homes and on the streets were made in a concerted way, starting from Dacca on March 1. On March 3, a colony of the non-Bengalis in Chittagong was attacked by a mob of nearly 12,000 people, all armed to the teeth, and a regular fight between the besiegers and the besieged ensued which continued for about eight hours. A house in the Railway colony was attacked by another mob, but the inmates resisted with a 12-bore gun for hours until rescued by a Naval contingent which had been watching the whole show from their installation a hund ed yards away. The Bengali members of a military intelligence group, which was out in the field, suddenly set upon their non-Bengali colleagues and killed them.

As a result of these actions the civilian non-Bengalis were forced to remain indoors while military intelligence was also eliminated. Only a few of the non-Bengalis continued to attend their duties but were totally cowed down. Apparently administration was in chaos, but actually it was being smoothly run in the interests of the secessionists. The question may be asked by readers as to why the Bengalis joined the secessionists if a majority of them were not in their favour. Firstly, few of them thought that

the movement was to lead to secession. It was considered only a traditional display of antipathy against what some believed to be their exploiters, justice being at the end of it, or a greater power to East Pakistan within the national framework. Secondly, a very large section of them was cowed down by the militant approach of the Awami League volunteers. The field was wholly in the hands of the party goondas and Indian infiltrators masquerading as such. Even the leaders who were opposed to the Awami League were not safe from the insulting depredations of these "volunteers" and members of the so-called "Mukti Bahini".

That most of the members of the so-called "Mukti Bahini" who were operating at this time and those who eventually came with the Indian army after the fall on December 16, 1971, were not the same could be adjudged clearly by those non-Bengalis (or Pakistanis) caught in the net after Bangladesh had been established. The majority of the Mukti Bahini of the earlier period were Indian infiltrators who went home after the military action. Those who came back with the Indian army in December were young boys recruited from the Indian camps from amongst those who had run away in panic from East Pakistan. Bhattacharjee in his book "*Dateline Mujibnagar*", mentions the average age of these as 16, the lowest being 13 and the highest 19, who were trained in India and indoctrinated there.

Many of the so-called members of the Mukti Bahini were interviewed by the author during 1972, and they mentioned the lies on which they were fed

by the Indians. They were told, for example, that West Pakistan, not producing any rice had to be fed with the grain imported from East Pakistan, sold at home at Rs. 31 per maund against Rs. 20 in West Pakistan. They were filled with tales of heroes of Bengali nationalism till every one of them pictured himself at his immature age to be a hero. This explained every one of the "Mukti Bahini" introducing himself as "commander" after his return from India on the fall of East Pakistan, by which he actually meant a "commando".

In short, the Mukti Bahini members in March 1971 saw to it that no one dared come out in public with a line different from that of the secessionists. Even the leaders of such parties as the Jamaat-e-Islami had to give statements supporting the Awami League line, for fear of being beaten up. On March 13, 1971, Prof. Gulam Azam, the Amir of the Jamaat-e-Islami in East Pakistan, issued a statement to the press stating that ":the demand of the 'Bengalis' cannot be resisted by the Government of Pakistan any longer", (vide Morning News, Dacca, dated March 14).

The movement for driving a wedge between the people of East Pakistan and the national armed forces was set afoot in September 1970, after the cyclone, when lurid tales of their non-cooperation with the civilian Government in distributing relief goods, were circulated. The tales included such supporting proofs as statements by foreign agencies in the field on mercy missions, with the Pakistani armed forces personnel an obstruction to a rapid distribution of relief goods.

By February, this antipathy was brought into the field more extensively. Military contingents moving from place to place were obstructed, and every petty tiff was transformed into a grievance and given wide publicity, through statements and protests. This forced the authorities to confine the forces to barracks as far as it could be possible. Troop movements were, therefore, made difficult, as they were dominated by the constant fear of clash with the civilians, ready to be turned into political capital.

By March 6, 1971 therefore, the stage had been set for Mujib to announce and run a parallel Government in East Pakistan. The next day he announced it in a crowded public speech at the Race Course Maidan at Dacca, along with a militant diatribe against the Armed Forces. He openly challenged to destroy them without food or water.

The situation had grown to such dimensions that on March 8, a train load of Indian arms, along with soldiers, arrived from the Indian border right into Chittagong! This was only discovered after the army had recaptured Chittagong Railway Head quarters on April 2. The officials of Railway who took part in organising and running the train were taken into custody then and punished.

It is not necessary to go into the details of what happened between March 7 and March 25. It is a story of surrender after surrender to Mujib's high treason by the Government of General Yahya Khan. He had by now fully realised that he had been led up the garden path till now, and there could be no Presidency of a united Pakistan under the Awami

League. But he was still trying to fish something out of the mess. That again was a mistake. The initiative seemed to have passed out of the hands of Mujib altogether and into the hands of unseen forces, who were partly represented by Malik Tajuddin and Nazrul Islam. Even the District Officers were lodging complaints against the army not to the Governor, Chief Secretary or the Martial Law Administrator, but to Tajuddin! The radio and other means of communication were in the hands of the Awami Leaguers and the Railway had stopped running. All the taxes including those supposed to have been collected by the Centre were to be paid in a Bank ragistered in East Pakistan and run by Bengalis. This was as good as a declaration of independence without stating it in so many words. Evidence enough there was for prosecuting Mujib and his henchmen for treason. But, surprisingly enough, President Yahya still took a conciliatory line. As a result of this he wrote the epitaph of hundreds of thousands of non-Bengalis, eventually massacred in the most heinous and horrible fashion. In fact, it could be said that a large section of the Pakistanis were sacrified to politics without the batting of an eye-lid. For, these people who could have given a good account of themselves in a fight, remained on the horns of a dilemma until their arms were collected by the civilian officials, and they were left without anything to defend themselves while the Awami Leaguers went on insisting that they had been given arms by the Pakistan armed forces, a blatant lie.

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CHAPTER 13

The "Biharis"

The "Biharis" or non-Bengalis of East Pakistan came to be a much-maligned community, especially during the insurrection of the Awami League in 1971. The peculiar name jumped all of a sudden into prominence and acquired global notoriety, thanks to the coloured reportage of the British Broadcasting Corporation and the Voice of America as well as the Western Press.

In fact, these media of propaganda presented the conundrum to the gaping people of the world as to why these "Biharis" were made the victims of ghastly murders and a "pogrom" which could shame any anti-Jewish massacres of the last century in Europe in its ferocity and viciousness. Some of the most remarkable victims of this propaganda were the West Pakistanis, of all others.

"The Muhajireen in West Pakistan", said a Pakistan Army Major in April 1971, "have merged themselves with the local population. Why couldn't you?" he asked.

While the Western press asserted that there must be something very much wrong with the 'Biharis', their own countrymen in the other wing looked askance at the absence of cultural and lingual uniformity which could not be attained by these people in East Pakistan. It is tragic that none of these critics had a coherent and logical view of the situation as it developed in the eastern wing after independence in 1947.

It would have been apparent from the previous pages that Indian machinations in East Pakistan did not allow, from the very outset, the growth of a proper nationalistic outlook amongst the natives of that province and that the biggest stepping stone of their propaganda in rousing their antipathy against the West, was difference of language and economic exploitation. The "Biharis" in this context were made to appear as the thin end of the wedge on behalf of the West Pakistanis. In fact, right from the beginning they were dubbed with the contemptible appellation of "Pachhim-Pakistaner Dalal" or "agents of West Pakistan".

One of the most important points to be understood is, that most of the Biharis (or non-Bengalis) who migrated to East Pakistan had gone there filled with a spirit of making the ideology of Pakistan a success, fired as it were with great enthusiasm. Very few of them had actually been pressed out by conditions of civil war or massacres, as in the case of East Punjab or parts of U.P. The Bihar riots which had taken place in 1946 were forgotten and many of the families of that Indian province, who had left their hearths and homes, had actually long since gone away, mostly to Karachi.

A greater part of the so-called Biharis were those who had actually migrated from Calcutta which had been a cosmopolitan city since its very birth and could boast of a vast Urdu-speaking population sucked in from the provinces next to Bengal and also from all over the subcontinent. And most of them were capable of making good in a struggle against odds. They could do so in Calcutta, and more so in East Pakistan where the backward native population could hardly match their intrinsic worth.

An example of the remarkable struggle for survival waged by these people in East Pakistan after their migration would be that of a highly educated and gifted person who moved to Chittagong in 1947. Unable to find any prospects in a sorely undeveloped region, he put his natural talents in music, learnt as a hobby, to good use. He began by teaching art to a bunch of ladies of the red-light area and hired an abode in a Bhangi colony close-by. From that most doubtful situation, he gradually expanded his activities to giving entertaining demonstrations in the restricted official circles of the Railway and the Port, until the growing activities of Shipping in the harbour, opened fresh possibilities of work for him as a cargo-broker. In this profession he made good, built a house for himself and was a man of substance in slightly more than a decade. He set an example in the dignity of labour, ingeneous use of capacities and taking chances as they came his way, to improve his fortunes. He was a poet and a litterateur and so was his worthy wife. His activities were fully known and he was admired for his pluck, and his house later became a centre of polished

society. Unfortunately he died in the 1960's and his family migrated to Pakistan after the establishment of Bangladesh.

Such were the ways in which many of the Biharis built up their careers in East Pakistan, struggling against odds and making good. In the first instance, they came with the full knowledge that careers in the new country of their selection would not be beds of roses and they arrived with the will to survive in an alien atomsphere and some sort of equipment, in terms of cash, education or technical know-how, and backed by these, succeeded, but not without a hard uphill climb.

The charge that they were assisted in their success by the non-Bengali officials who manned the majority of the administrative jobs in the province, is completely false and based on mere presumption. The boot was really on the other leg. These officials, with rare exception, for personal reasons or for political, usually gave a most step-motherly treatment to the migrants and would not consider even their most justifiable cases in the normal way unless backed by Bengali Ministers or officials.

In 1947-48, establishment of migrant colonies was considered. The civilian officials, just to prove their *bona fides*, selected sites for these which were logistically untenable. Nearly all of them were situated miles away from the main towns, without any buses or bus-routes connecting them at that time. The towns were the only areas where these migrants could find a wage-earning job. This put them to great hardships. It was due to their influx, on the other hand, that prices

of real estate and house-rents began soaring. Landlords demanded Rs. 150 for accommodation for which they were receiving Rs. 15 only. In that early period, the difficulties of paying these exorbitant rentals to mean and illiterate landlords, created a lot of bad blood between the migrants and the local landlords and their relatives. The so-called "traditional Islamic welcome" either is a figment of the imagination of many, or did not last more than two or three months—until a proper appreciation had been made of the profitable potentialities of the influx. There were doubtless isolated cases of remarkable affection and sacrifice displayed by some, but they were so few or far between that they failed to provide any succour to the migrants as a whole.

One of the most important section of the "Biharis" consisted of Railwaymen. The Bengal and Assam Railway covered practically the whole of East Pakistan prior to independence and the majority of its employees, especially in cosy office jobs consisted of Hindu Babus. Most of them left East Pakistan on partition, as a part of the overall plan to destroy the province at its birth. While among those who had voluntarily opted for Pakistan from the Muslim employees of the Indian Railways, there was a glut in field jobs, there was an overall shortage in others. The Governor General of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, had to issued an appeal to Muslim Railwaymen in India to opt out for this country with the assurance that their service conditions "would be guaranteed". This appeal was published in the Pakistan Gazette. In response many gave their

option.

As a result, those who came to East Pakistan were more that the required number. About three thousand of them were packed off to West Pakistan in 1948 or 1949 and promptly discharged from service. The Quaid-e-Azam was by now dead, and this was the way his promise put in the official gazette was carried out!

Soon after the others had been absorbed, disputes broke out between the union representing the former B & A Railway employees and the Administration on the question of seniorities. Representing the optees, Pakistan Railwaymen's League sought to give evidence before the Tribunal, but were denied the right. The Award of the Tribunal, however, when given, was made binding on all the employees of the Railway, perpetuating an injustice which had no parallel in the history of labour-employee relations. Incidentally, all this unilateral action was taken by non-Bengali officials who have been accused by the foreign as well as West Pakistani press of favouring the "Biharis".

Going back in the matter of time, a very interesting situation had developed quite early which brought about a confrontation between the optee railwaymen and the local population. Most of the checking staff consisted of optees. They insisted on performing their duties most assiduously and honestly. At the time, a lot of the native population took it for granted that national independence also spelt out their freedom to travel without having to pay for it. The latter considered checking by the optee staff an act of enmity and there were many quarrels erupting as a result of this peculiar situation. One could hardly expect the check-

ing staff to be diplomatic in the performance of their duties which they considerded sacred and were determined to perform without fear or favour. All the more reason, they argued, that the letter of the law should be strictly adhered to now that Pakistan was independent. They quoted the Quaid-e-Azam's advice in the matter of obeying the law and maintaining of discipline, and they were right. Only it helped in building up that wall between the migrants and the Bengalis which later on proved so disastrous. Some of the anti-Pakistan elements and especially the Communists took every chance to start or encourage such quarrels.

But the "Bihari" Railway staff suffered untold hardships in the performance of their duties. There were not enough quarters to accomonodate them and their families. Many lived in open railway wagons at big stations with sidings. On wayside stations, they had to make temporary arrangements on platforms or in bamboo *bashas* which were to them a novelty. These were most troublesome, as they had no amenities or comfort nor any privacy in them. But all these travails were suffered by these migrants in the interests of putting their shoulder to Pakistan's efforts to get up on its legs.

It has been accepted by devotees of truth among the historians of the period, that the Railway at least could not have run if these migrants had not come in such large numbers as "optees". There is the case of the riverine transport. A large part of the internal trade of East Pakistan was carried on the rivers, on boats, and dhows which were as old as the pyra-

mids. The mechanised transport of the province consisted of steamers and "flats" run by a single British company, the Joint Steamer Companies (combination of the Indian General River Navigation Co, and the British India Steam Navigation Co.,). Due to the exodus of the Hindu staff and there being no "Biharis" available to replace them, their sevice was cut down to a single internal link between Narayangunj and Goalundo. This company refused to cooperate with the aspirations of Pakistan and did not care to train any new personnel to assist them. They maintained the very existence of the company for two reasons : firstly, they had to look after their cargo services from Calcutta to Assam which had to pass through East Pakistan rivers for a considerable length of their journey with men and materials for their tea-gardens, and secondly, for their own tea-estates within East Pakistan, especially in the district of Sylhet. This they managed somehow to carry on with Hindu staff whom they persuaded to stay on.

Entry of the "Biharis" to services was blocked for one reason or the other from the very outset. By 1953, their recruitment in Government jobs had come to a stop. Naturally, many of the "Biharis" took to business and used their ingenuity to the fullest extent to make good, resulting in greater prosperity to them than in service. As a new generation came into the field, restrictions were placed on business also, to which the "Biharis" replied by taking Bengali partners and doing business in their name. This led to some corruption among the officials which was but natural.

A word has to be said about "cultural integra-

tion" which the foreign press especially is very fond of specifying. So far as the original migrants are concerned, it was difficult for them to take to the manners and customs of the Bengalis right from the start. In the first instance, "culture" is not something which can be picked up and donned as a robe ; it is acquired as a gradual process, and includes not only the language but also habits and customs. So far as language was concerned, the "Biharis" did not let much time to elapse before they could speak Bengali as fluently as the natives. It was, however, difficult for them to bring habits and customs to conform to those of the Bengalis, twisted and demeaned as they were by two hundred years of crushing Hindu domination. The "Biharis", generally came from an urban background while the Bengali Muslims from a rural one. Language could not prove a remarkable barrier. For, if it was, it had been demolished in the first few years of stay of them igrants in their new habitat.

The new generation, including children of the "Biharis" of the migration time, acquired a remarkable proficiency in the Bengali language. There are quite a number of "Bihari" young men who took their Master's degree in the Bengali language, also a number of poets in it. There were frequent inter-marriages and the gradual process of assimilation was taking its course with a greater rapidity than in other parts of the world. It would have been faster if the process had not been obstructed by the abandonment of "Muslim Bengali" and taking recourse to Sanskritized Bengali in East Pakistan which was a master-stroke of the Indian subversionists.

At the time of independence, the general trend was that anecdotes, idioms and proverbs quoted by the Bengali Muslims were from Hindu mythological sources, while the "Biharis" were used to similar quotes from Islamic history or from Persian or Arabic sources. As all were Muslims, this jarred on the non-Bengali feelings. But, gradually, Bengali Muslims were adopting the ways and modes culled from an Islamic background, and were proud of it. A lot of observances, as during marriage ceremonies, at the time of Muharram and Eids among the Bangalis which had been copies of Hindu rituals, were abandoned and in their place ceremonials brought by the so-called "Biharis" with them adopted. This was not wholly due to the migrants of East Pakistan but also followed a stay of the native East Pakistanis in West Pakistan. Alternatively, quite a number of local families became anglicised as students returned after long residence in the United Kingdom or America.

But, at the same time, there were marks which distinguished the non-Bengalis from their local brethren. In the first instance, a tall and well-built man was invariably taken to be a non-Bengali, even though there were a lot of tall persons among the Bengalis themselves. Also, the "Biharis" could never countenance propaganda against the Pakistan ideology, and this was the major factor which led to their being victims of bloodshed in March 1971 and later.

The struggle for survival was hard for the "Biharis". There were no short-cuts for them, and their success was an achievement for which they must be given credit. But, this credit was not given even

by the people of West Pakistan. The Karachi and Lahore newspapers selected Bengalis as their correspondents and the latter fed them with their own variety of propaganda material, bringing about false notions that the "Biharis" were socially incompatible and that the Bengalis were "exploited" by them as by West Pakistanis. This was a totally incorrect assumption, based on a false premise from the very outset that a Bihari settled in East Pakistan was only an East Pakistani and, therefore, not a Pakistani at all. This was Pakistan which had been named as the homeland of the "hundred million Muslims of the sub-continent", and therefore the legal and logical homeland of the Bihari. He was, however, certainly the odd man in Bangladesh !

Considering the enormous difficulties and hurdles faced by the "Biharis" in East Pakistan, where they were scattered, and had no single point of concentration where they could be in a majority, like the migrants of West Pakistan, who had Karachi, it was not uncommon for them to become nostalgic. They had given up voluntarily a homeland of their own and settled in a new one, on the call of the founding fathers of Pakistan, and they were being put into the position of second-class citizens. There was certainly nothing wrong in the objectives of the Quaid-e-Azam and his colleagues, but for its incorrect and false application put into motion by their successors. The fault lay with the successors not with the founders, along with the seeds of alien propaganda carried on surreptitiously.

We have mentioned the political anomaly of this in the foregoing pages. At the time of independence,

Hindus in East Pakistan before their migration to India were 24 per cent and they had their representatives in the National and Provincial Assemblies. After the situation had been so defined and accepted officialy, nearly 90 lakh Hindus migrated to India. Some of their representatives (elected on the basis of separate electorate), however, sat in Pakistan's law-making bodies while their electors were being rehabilitated in India. In fact, a proper number of seats, conforming to the number of Hindus who had migrated, should have been cancelled and in their place ear-marked for the "Biharis" in proportion to their actual population. This was not done. The "Biharis" could not have a political voice of their own and this further slashed at their position of equal citizens in Pakistan.

It should have been recognised from the very outset that the migrants, not having their roots in the places where they had settled, would be at a disadvantage against any other local person, who had a long background of stay in the area, and their capabilities could hardly be enough to earn for them more than a few votes. By not giving them the right to contest elections on reserved seats, they were permanently deprived of their democratic right. It may be said to the credit of the "Muhajireen" that in the interest of the development of a uniform national community in Pakistan, they did not press for such seats. But, unfortunately, not only was a uniform national community not allowed to develop, the rise of provincialism confirmed their permanent exclusion from the democratic process. With the rise of provincialism in East

Pakistan, the voice of the "Biharis" was totally lost in the din of hatred, this minority unable to express its point of view in any forum.

On the other hand, a vast Hindu community who had migrated to India and was living there permanently, continued to have its representation in the national Parliament and the Provincial Assembly of East Pakistan. This contradicted the very concept of democracy which was being set up on the lines of the West without any social parallels here.

According to the census figures of 1961, if there were 2.1 million Urdu-speaking "Biharis" in East Pakistan, they should have had about 3 per cent seats earmarked for them in the provincial and 1.75 per cent in the central legislatures, that is, at least 5 seats in the National Assembly of Pakistan in a House of 300 while in the East Pakistan Assembly the number of seats given to them should have been 11. Actually they had none. Nor could they be elected to any general seats.

While the "Biharis" took their chances on an equal plane with the others in the provinces, there was indeed, one section from the migrants which could be said to have really built up the edifice of exploitation. The same section had been exploiting West Pakistan as well in a similar manner. This community consisted of the business people mostly from the Kathiawar and Bombay provinces of India. Their homes being closer to Karachi most of them had moved on to Karachi, and had established their branches in East Pakistan. They controlled enormous financial resources, including Banks, and they only knew how to

make the maximum profits irrespective of where and how. Their activities were helpful to Pakistan in the beginning, since they provided the initial nuclei of capital formation for the eventual industrialisation of the country, both West and East, but it was their extermely exclusive and profit-generating outlook which eventually did the greatest harm to Pakistan.

Since their man seat of activity was Karchi, their operations in East Pakistan were given the name of "Exploitation by West Pakistan". Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, for the first time, had the courage to point out in his election campaign in 1970, that both East and West Pakistan were exploited by the same section. This was the real truth, though some people refused to pay much attention to this part of his assertion.

This section of the migrants was not only distinct from the "Biharis", it chose to remain confined to its own shell most of the time. Few of them mixed socially with the "Biharis" and, in fact, exploited them as brazenly as they did the Bengalis. It was actully their sins which were paid for by the "Biharis." It suited them for their own reasons. It, however, helped the case of India for subverting East Pakistan. Prior to the elections in 1970, this business community tried to "purchase" not only its safety but a measure of preferential treatment in case Mujib came to power, as it was becoming clear that he was going to. They contributed enormous amounts of money to the Awami League's political coffers.

The business principles which this section has followed are completely contradictory to the principles laid down by Islam. They follow the Jewish ground

rules, though in some ways more Jewish than the Jews themselves. They consider no dishonest means to make a penny on the side to be against social rules of conduct. Jews built for themselves a world monopoly in trade and industry by building up confidence in their deals through a measure of honest conduct and adherence to national interests in their countries of adoption. The Pakistani business community did neither. Its motto has been "maximum profit and today". They would refuse to fight for their rights, even if there were ample grounds, but take recourse to bribery and other backdoor methods. They stuck to those lines from the very outset and have been weaving their own rules, to be adopted by others to such a degree that social standards today have thoroughly degenerated in the whole of Pakistan.

It is a fact that during the massacres of March/April 1971 which accounted for more than 200,000 "Biharis" there were very few of the members of this commercial section who were killed. Even after the fall of East Pakistan, there were very few of them who lost their lives or were jailed. They restarted their business right after the fall, and many of the firms gave sizeable advertisements in the newspapers that they had "no other business in Pakistan" and were loyal and sincere citizens of Bangladesh only! Actually all of them have extensive business in this country and it did not hurt their moral values to give such a palpably false declaration.

The "Biharis" had not even suspected that a terrible fate awaited them in March/April 1971. After

the Awami League had won the elections, they tried to submit memorandums to Mujib, signifying their loyalty to the political destiny of East Pakistan. These declarations were of no avail. The fate of "Biharis" had been sealed; for it was known that they could not but at heart be loyal to the Pakistan ideology and that they would prove *helpful to the Pakistan army in its efforts to put down the insurrection.*

During the period from March 25 to April 21 of 1971, they were subjected to a mass massacre all over East Pakistan. Certain concentrated pockets, and the Bihari inhabitants of Dacca, escaped being destroyed for local reasons. In Dacca, for example, the army had moved pretty fast and opposition had been crushed within a few hours. In Chittagong, while 12,000 including women and children were heinously murdered, some of the colonies were not attacked because of rumours that they had plenty of arms to protect themselves. In Bogra, the Biharis escaped for reasons not yet known, though within the district, at Santahar, a flourishing colony was wiped out to the man. The same situation was repeated at Dinajpur, while in Rangpur only isolated killings took place. In Kushtia, where the insurgents were led by Colonel Ataul Ghani Usmani, they were thrust into the jail and thus escaped massacre.

The horrors perpetrated during this period were unimaginable. In Chittagong, people were brought to a number of butchering centres where each person was either put to the knife or all his blood drawn with huge syringes, leaving the victims to die a horrifying death. In Dinajpur, they were

taken in herds to the riverside and there subjected to machinegun fire. In Kalurghat—an industrial area seven miles from Chittagong, high officials of a jute mill and other men were tied to trees and butchered, their women then forced to serve the members of the East Bengal Regiment in the nude before being massacred to every single person on the point of the Regiment's withdrawal on the advance of the Pakistan army. In Bibirhat, near Chittagong, again, they were shoved into a mosque and pelted with hand-grenades followed by bursts of machinegun fire.

The Pakistan Government publised a white paper in 1971 giving details of the people killed without, of course, going into the manner of the killings. The story has partly been re-told in a book published in Pakistan in 1974 which depicts a large number of cases in which there was someone or the other left to tell the story. There were, howeve, hundreds of others in which there was no survivor or eye-witness left. For, most of the people who escaped were at the time themselves stalked with fear, and in hiding, and could have only seen fleeting glimpses of what was happening around them. There were other cases, of persons who showed an inclination to utilise treachery to save their own skin, and survived by cooperating with the groups of murderers and vandals. Their stories, obviously, have to be taken with a pinch of salt, since they cannot be retold without colour to jusify their own attitude.

There is, however, ample evidence to prove that mosques were desecrated, copies of the Holy Quran

were kicked and torn, people were killed while saying their prayers, or while reading the Holy Book. People of East Pakistan were basically more religious than those of the West and they have had an inbred fear of the unknown which keeps them from committing acts of desecration. The killings were generally committed by soldiers, and civilians were only rarely involved and when they were, it was by fear or force. The conclusion, therefore, is inescapable that those who indulged in the massacres were, as a rule, Indian infiltrators who had a particular hatred for the religiosity of the Muslims and since Islam formed the basic factor joining the two wings of Pakistan.

The White Paper, or other publised records are, however, silent over one point. In the melee, while people were being killed and the 'Biharis' were running about for their lives, thousands of young girls were carried away to India and sold there. The then Superintendent of Police of Bogra, a gentleman originally hailing from Jaunpur (in U. P.) himself expressed a certainty that not all of the Biharis of Santahar were killed, but women and young girls were taken away in large numbers to India and sold. This fact was never considered in all the talks which took place with India or mentioned in the despatches by foreign correspondents. As a result, all these Muslim girls and women have been forgotten and might even now be leading a life of horror in Indian brothels or forcibly kept by people in that country to a life of ignominy and shame. In Calcutta, some Muslims had formed themselves into asociety or association to dig out such cases on their own but, for obvious

reasons, they could not have been encouraged by their Government.

Following similar happenings in 1947, both India and Pakistan had set up official organisations to search out kidnapped women and repatriate them for a re-union with their parents or relatives. But, at that time India had a stake too, with a number of Hindu and Sikh women being left behind in West Punjab. This time it was all a one-way traffic, and Pakistanis have proved themselves without that basic nationalistic ego which forces men to look for their womenfolk as the keepers of their honour and self-respect.

The massacre of the Biharis was a pre-planned affair, a part of the military strategy of the insurrectionists. Those who talk of it being the result of any absence of integration or due to hatred generated over the years, either show a complete ignorance of facts or are moved by the publicity device to give the whole of the rebellion a colour of spontaneity which belies the real forces behind it. The proof of it is that in practically every case, the civilian population kept away from the killings unless called upon to take part in it when they only did so out of fear for their own skins. In many cases the civilians even tried to prevent the massacres and many of the 'Biharis' have survived because of their timely intervention. Of course, a large number of bad characters or goondas among the civilians did take part in the looting and killing, as such groups always do, but primarily for gain and not out of hatred.

If a thorough analysis is made of the events of the time, it would be apparent that the strategists for the

rebellion were practically correct in their assessment of the Bihari role in the struggle. For, the latter did lend a helping hand to the armed forces against the rebels in every place in the province.

It is also surprising that the Pakistan Government did not raise the question of *genocide* of the Biharis in the United Nations when Bangladesh applied for its membership. For, it is quite apparent that while the Pakistan Army could not have planned the destruction of 75 million Bengali Muslims, as stated by the representatives of Mujib's Bangladesh, the eradication of a linguistic minority of 2 million was certainly planned and a good deal of it was also carried out. That India was also fully involved in the game would be apparent from the fact that when a number of Biharis tried to cross the border, they were promptly clapped in jail, where some of them are still rotting.

It is patent that the case of the Biharis has gone by default. It appears that the Pakistanis themselves have been, by and large, victims of the propaganda of the enemies of Pakistan and its ideology. Others have tried to suppress facts because they ran counter to their ideological way of thinking. The "Communists" or the "scientific socialists", had persuaded the People's Party not to treat the Biharis except on terms of a regional minority as their being considered as victims of a false nationalism was bound to clash with the Soviet line. The Jamaat-e-Islami tried to whittle down facts as they had ambitions of working out their own party line in Bangladesh, and it completely falsified their own analysis of the situation in the former East Pakistan. Both of these parties have been in the habit of playing

down the Pakistan ideology within the sub-continent in persuance of their own political objectives.

To take up the thread of the story again, the Biharis, true to their ideological moorings, proved their loyalty to Pakistan, by coming to the assistance of the Armed Forces which had to deal with the insurgency every where in East Pakistan. In Dacca, they offered to look after the northern and western sides of the Airport while the Army were busy mopping up opposition in the South, in the main city. In Jessore, they provided the way through a colony of theirs to the Forces surrounded on all sides by the insurgents, at a grave risk to their own lives. In Chittagong, they provided a stirring welcome to the small section of the army which had arrived from Comilla after four days of gruelling marches disturbed by armed attacks. In Saidpur, they kept the insurgents at bay with crudely manufactured heavy guns. The story was repeated everywhere, and it cannot be dismissed simply by saying that they did so for their own protection. Bengali Muslims, devoted to the cause of Pakistan, aligned themselves with the insurgents out of fear alone. There is no doubt that after the fall of Dacca, many of them were shot dead, refused to shout "Jai Bangla" as demanded of them, but it was rather late in the day, though credit is due to them for their heroism.

The Biharis could have given a better account of themselves, had the Yahya regime taken steps to enable them to do so. The uncertainty which lasted till the end of the "talks" played havoc with the fate of the Urdu-speaking minority. For, they were not sure as to what was going to happen and when on March 24 and

25, District authorities asked them to surrender their arms, they did so meekly, and when killings started on March 26, they were without arms and any reasonable way to defend themselves.

After the devastation to their population and properties had taken place and the Pakistan Army had re-captured East Pakistan inch by inch, Maj. General Rao Farman Ali asked them for volunteers, and within a week from the call, they put forward nearly 15,000 of them, promptly enrolled in the Pakistan Civil Armed Forces, given a short-training of a few days only and sent to the borders. They served their country to the best of their ability, all through the nine months, from the period of insurgency upto the fall of Dacca.

It was only in the months of June and July that Razakars and the *Al-Badr* and *Al-Shams* were recruited from amongst the Bengalis to assist the army. The Jamaat-e-Islami, a political party of Pakistan, has gone into ecstasies in eulogising the services of the *Al-Badr* and *Al-Shams* which they were instrumental in organising, but they did not have a single word of praise for the EPCAF, which was also a volunteer organisation. The *Al-Badr* and *Al-Shams* who claimed to be nearly a hundred thousand strong, were given the responsibility of putting their finger on Indian infiltrators in the rural areas and assisting the army in mopping up—a responsibility in which they practically failed to perform with credit. For, after the general amnesty of August, 1971, there was such an influx of the Indian commandos that law and order went completely overboard. But, since it is always difficult for an alien army to go on operating behind enemy lines for a very long period, and there

was the danger of the infiltrators being wiped out to the man, that the Indian Commander-in-Chief had to advise his country's Prime Minister either to attack East Pakistan or withdraw them. Still, it should have been comparatively easy for the *Al-Badr* and *Al-Shams* volunteers to pick the infiltrators out as they came. This they failed to do, as they persued local objectives, of their own personal and family vendettas.

While it is not intended to denounce or condemn the volunteers, one is forced to point out the sectarian attitude of the Jamaat in only extolling the virtues of their own men as against the East Pakistan Civil Armed Forces who have not even been mentioned in their records of defence. On the other hand, on surrender the EPCAF personnel were not even informed of the event and were left to fend for themselves. Out of 15,000 only about 2,500 were taken prisoners of war and eventually repatriated to Pakistan. The others, completely at sea as to what they should do, were either killed by mobs or had to run from place to place to save their lives.

Parents and relatives who had so happily offered these young men to give their lives in the defence of Pakistan, were not even aware of there whereabouts, and were, in their own place, victimised for "collaboration" with the Pakistan Army after the fall of Dacca. Many were killed, or their properties snatched away, reducing them to beggary.

After these remnants who had been taken prisoner by India were repatriated to Pakistan in 1973-74, they were first subjected to a gruelling interrogation to find if they were not "plants" by the Indians (which some

could be) and when their *bona fides* were established they were placed at the disposal of the Cabinet Division of the Government of Pakistan, to be treated as civilians, not even paid arrear salary for the period of incarceration nor any special help provided to rehabilitate them. Many of them still have their families in East Pakistan, not yet repatriated because of lack of clearance by the Cabinet Division.

So far as the civilians are concerned, it was decided after the Delhi Pact that 1,40,000 of them, or about 28,000 families would be repatriated under the auspices of the United Nations. Adding those who were repatriated through Nepal, or via other routes, the total number of families brought to Pakistan would not be more than 40,000. It could hardly be a difficult task to absorb these into the economic stream of the country where about 1.4 crore families lived. Still there were voices heard from various political sources complaining against their "burden" on Pakistan.

While these 40,000 families came to this country wading through a veritable sea of blood, after living through a period of three years of horror inside and outside the jails of Bangladesh leaving behind their savings of a lifetime, a most luke-warm attitude was shown to the matter of their rehabilitation. Not more than 1,000 houses have since been built for them on very small plots of land, out of the money donated by friendly Islamic nations, and all of the cash given on their arrival to launch them to a new life here, did not exceed Rs. 300 per family. The rest of the 39,000 families repatriated were left on their own to fend for themselves on an alien and turbulent sea. There were

no appeals to the friendly world community, especially the Muslim lands, to assist in their resettelment, no use made of vast amounts of "refugee tax" collected in the name of rehabilitating such very migrations, no schemes were drawn up for their rehabilitation. It was certain that, with excellent relations existing between Pakistan and the Arab nations, Pakistan and RCD nations, any number of such schemes could have been prepared, and if targets publicised along with appeals, enough cash would have been contributed by the friendly countries as well as the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, till recently presided over by a Muslim.

It was a sort of jealously which governed the treatment of these flotsam and jetsam of humanity coming over from the former East Pakistan. This jealousy was not restricted to the Government alone. Important sectors of the public were also affected by it. The "Biharis" were given the greatest sympathy by the public of the Punjab, who loaded them with gifts as they arrived here. Surprisingly enough, this milk of human kindness was absent in Karachi where the Urdu-speaking population mostly lived. As these people landed in that city, they were given a very cold shoulder from the very moment they set their foot on Pakistani soil. A large number of so-called philanthropic organisations which had sprung up over-night in their name, only looked for business opportunities, especially in betel-leaves which were being brought with them by each family and was purchased on the airport for half the prevailing price in the market. Others setup shops in Orangi to "register" allotments

of land which was not theirs to give, against Rs. 10 for each family. A good deal of material given by really charitable persons disappeared en route.

Political organisations made their own capital out of the misery of these people. The Jamaat-e-Islami would give help only to those who were already its supporters or were prepared to enlist themselves on the party books. So did others, but not so openly or actively.

As soon as repatriation started and the Biharis began to pour into Karachi, house-rents were raised. Many, who had close relations (*e.g.* brothers) and were repatriated in the category of "divided families", received the most lukewarm welcome from their own kith and kin. Many were refused support for more than a few days and forced to seek out their own way without any help or direction. What the Biharis saw, on their arrival in Pakistan, was a most curious phenomenon in which the old adage that blood calleth unto blood seemed to have proved palpably untrue.

CHAPTER 14

Military Action

The subject matter of this Chapter is actually out of the scope of this book. The province had already reached the culmination of subversion and was now ripe for the final act which could lead to successful aggression from outside. The ground, of course, had to be prepared for this aggression, for which conditions were to be established.

There have been many comments with regard to the military action taken by Yahya in March 1971. Some of these have pointed out that he was wrong in doing so ; others have accused Yahya of a wrong attitude to East Pakistan promoted by a section of the vested interests in the Punjab. We would like to make it clear that the final decision lay with Mujib and Yahya. Once the Awami League leader had made up his mind to bring about an unbendable rigidity in his decision to announce that he would draw up Pakistan's Constitution on the basis of Six Points, the die had been cast. There was no alternative to that decision but military action.

No leader of a country, which has its basis in history, can dare allow its dismemberment through negotiation by some individuals. He was bound to be accused of high treason if he did so. Those who talk of a "political decision" do so without correctly assessing the numerous factors of history involved. The arguments of such a secession were more cogent and stronger in the case of North and South in the history of the United States, the economic and political factors involved much more powerful. Abraham Lincoln was much in the same position as Yahya even though he was an elected president unlike the Pakistani General. But, the results of the American Civil War put a stamp of justice and wisdom on Lincoln's action and of condemnation in the case of Yahya because he failed. This failure was not due to the justified grounds of secessionism but due to aggression by India, in which it differs from what took place in the New World in the last century.

No doubt the difficulties of solution of the tangle lay in acts of omission and commission much earlier; but, once those errors had been made and a certain stage arrived at, any forthcoming action had to be governed by the new set of circumstances. Yahya, for example, should have disallowed election propaganda by the Awami League on the basis of Six Points, since it clearly transgressed the clauses of the Legal Framework Order which seems to have been inserted, in the first instance, against that Party's line itself. He did not do so for reasons best known to him.

Yahya's Government should have known about the infiltration of Indian *agents provocateur* into East Pakistan;

his intelligence should have made the Central Government wiser of the activities of the Indian Border Security Force. In fact he knew nothing of what was brewing and, therefore, took no steps to check the application of the Nazi methods to the voting in East Pakistan. He should have also provided ample protection to voters at the polling booths.

These are the eleventh-hour activities which cried for being checked while there was time. There had been other such errors in the past also. But, once no containing action was taken and the elections allowed to be held providing for the full play of subversion, the nation was fully saddled with the consequences of the verdict at the polls. There was no escape from it. And there being no escape from it, the initative had passed from the hands of Yahya to that of Mujib and the Awami League.

For more than a month after the December elections there was absolute quiet on the political front. Obviously, Mujib was not quite certain as to what he should do next. It may be that he awaited directions from his foreign mentors. He was confronted with a peculiar situation. He was the leader of the largest single Party in the would-be Parliament of Pakistan. East Pakistan had a permanent majority in the House on the basis of one-man-one-vote. The time had come when East Pakistan could reap the benefits of its majority in the sovereign national representative body, could undo any injustices which might have been done in the past against his province and speed up its development. For this a strong and powerful Central Government was called for.

A constitution on the basis of Six Points, however, would have demolished that Centre, taken away his own hegemony from the hands of Mujib. But it also would have brought complete dismemberment to the whole of Pakistan, each province becoming an independent and separate state. For, an absolutely powerless Centre without the capacity to acquire and control finances, would have been incapable of looking after even Defence and Foreign Affairs, partial trade or currency.

The alternatives were very clear before the Awami League. On the one hand was the objective of framing an agreed Constitution which could provide Pakistan with a strong Centre which would be in the interests of the people of East Pakistan. On the other, there was the mechanism to dismember Pakistan. It was no longer a question of the secession of East Pakistan from the Centre, but a break-up of all the provinces.

After a wait of about a month, Mujib dropped his bombshell. He would, he declared, insist on drawing up the Constitution on the basis of Six Points. In other words, he was unwilling to take up the leadership of the country in order to make it strong and to undo all the past injustices, real or imaginary, supposed to have been done to East Pakistan. He was rather anxious to commit *harakiri* in the interest of doubtful benefits, obtain not only the secession of East Pakistan but also force all the provinces to drift apart outside a vanishing Centre.

He had already made it apparent that he was not going to acquit himself of those responsibilities which the election results had saddled him with. He refused

to go to West Pakistan to discuss with the political parties their views and the conditions on which they would be willing to cooperate. As the leader of the largest political party in the Parliament, and as the future Prime Minister of Pakistan, he should have initiated talks in a spirit of compromise with all the parties which had been returned to the Parliament. Instead of that he sat quietly in Decca and waited. This was against all norms of democratic conduct of a national leader. He said he did not do so because there was a conspiracy afoot to assassinate him if he went to the other wing. This was such an absurd and obnoxious assertion that it should not be necessary to make an analysis of it. If anyone wished to do so, he could do it even in his Dacca home. His final decision not to have anything to do with the rest of Pakistan is clear from this.

At first, as it is believed, many thought that Mujib was making his Six Points as a bargaining counter, to force the West Pakistan political parties to concede the maximum elbow-space to him in taking actions in the interests of East Pakistan as against the deep-rooted vested interests of the other wing. Soon, however, it was proved to be untrue. Mujib had no bargaining counter. He was out to destroy the Centre and he was absolutely in earnest.

That it was believed Mujib was out to do bargaining was particularly true of the leaders of the smaller political parties in the Parliament who wished to collect some crumbs from the grand table of the Awami League in power. They were, however, soon disillusioned. Mujib would not budge from his stand.

Then came the bigger parties and the biggest of them all was the Pakistan People's Party of which Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was the Chairman. This party claimed to speak for West Pakistan in a set-up in which both the wings had single large parties of their own, and in a dispensation which transferred power in the country into the hands of a purely East Pakistani party, he had to have some say to secure the interests of its own wing. All of these leaders went to Dacca, to discuss and to feel the way forward. Soon, however, they came against a brick wall of Mujib's one-track insistence. Simultaneously Mujib's henchmen in the Awami League were raising a great cloud of dust, by making allegations and charges in the press, to create confusion so that the real facts should be veiled. In this they succeeded.

The Awami League was particularly helped by those "leaders" who had found little support at the polls. That was more true of the so-called politicians of West Pakistan since they had been most decisively discarded by the electorate. In East Pakistan there was some doubt due to the un-free nature of the polls. While Fazlul Qadir Choudhry or Khan Abdus Sabur Khan were known to have substantial followings in East Pakistan, Air Marshal Asghar Khan had absolutely no following and the Jamaat-e-Islami, the Pakistan Democratic Party, the Jamiatul Ulama-e-Islam, the Jamiatul Ulama-e-Pakistan and the National Awami Party had received but limited mandates at the polls. They had little contribution to make to the constitution-making except in the way of ideological opinions. This was poor responsibility compared to

the noise they made to make the confusion worse confounded. It was thought that Asghar Khan at least, who was indulging in vociferous statement mongering all in support of Mujib, was angling for a Governorship under Mujib's Government-to-be. This also shows how little he appreciated the direction politics had been taking.

Instead of helping things, the furore dimmed the real goings on. It squared the pitch for Yahya and Bhutto both in their efforts to persuade Mujib from his task of breaking-up the country by insisting on a constitution on Six Points. One was well reminded of the Tower of Babel in which every person spoke in his own language not understood by the other, leading eventually to destruction.

One is particularly astounded on the quality of leadership produced by Pakistan. Apart from only a few standing persons, the general standard is that of mediocrity or even less. One has only to have some money and spare time in order to catch the attention of the people through equally mediocre newspapermen and one can in due time bloom forth as a politician with a good deal of say in national matters. The role of the journalists is particularly reprehensible in this respect. Some of them are always ready to sell their souls to anyone who is ready to rub them on the right side, irrespective of his qualities to do well by the people as a leader.

As an example one has often seen that national newspapers have called persons of shady characters as "leaders", a repetition of which in the press actually

helped them move into the front rank without much ado. The papers giving this kind of build-up never stop to think what this kind of leadership would eventually do to the fate and destiny of the nation. One has only to continue calling press conferences in the best hotels of the country, pass on gifts to properly-placed journalists, and he can become a Leader.

Interested powers, who have never thought good of the country, look around for such persons and the chaos of ideas they usually create in the political field, screening from public view the real and solid features and problems before a nation, in their "grey" psy-war operations. It is not necessary in Pakistan for them to back such persons directly: only a word here and a word there in the right quarters and the build-up comes automatically. When the time comes, the chorus gets going and so much noise is made that the voice of wisdom cannot be heard.

Then there is the cult of personality. Individuals, and not their capacities or thoughts or actions which count. And once some people decide to follow a person, then they do it blindly and none of his failings appear as failings. To these followers, their leader can never do evil; he is above all human frailties, in fact more than an angel. Appreciating a leader for his real qualities, eulogising good and pin-pointing or criticising evil, is never a part of their political understanding. It was for this reason that Ayub or Zulfikar Ali Bhutto were placed on the same level as Mujib or Mufti Mahmud. The resulting evil from this is before the world in the shape of the country's break-up.

Indian subversive operations in the former East Pakistan first spread a sense of hatred between the wings, then blinded them to the failings of Mujib as a leader and to the good in people like Abdus Sabur Khan, Fazlul Qadir Choudhry, Monem Khan (who had served East Pakistanis most devotedly for six years), Nurul Amin, Mahmud Ali, and other "elders" in the post-election period. This blindness made them see that (*i*) Mujib and his set of followers had brought forth an absolutely new set of leadership to East Pakistan; (*ii*) Mujib had taken a stand which was bound to break up the country and there was time to stand up against it; (*iii*) politics was moving on unnatural lines, with rejected men making much more noise than their comparative importance deserved; (*iv*) the country had been deliberately and intentionally plunged into a state of confrontation instead of a positive effort for the solution of problems. A wave of emotionalism had arisen and engulfed the whole of Pakistan.

The whole gamut of political activity was false and unrealistic. Mujib dominated the scene even though he was given his so-called mandate on the basis of only 8 per cent of Muslim votes of the province (explained earlier). While he talked of discussions, negotiations, talks, fears and conspiracies—all following each other in rapid-fire succession there were indications by the end of January 1971, that India had been taking actions designed to create physical disruption between the wings. The so-called "hijacking" of an Indian Airlines plane to Lahore by "Kashmiris" and its destruction there was made

an excuse to suspend permission of overflights, of Pakistani planes from February 4. This coincided with Mujib's increase in pressures for his stand that the Constitution would be framed only on the basis of Six Points and no other.

In a normal democratic process, Mujib should have gone to West Pakistan, or invited West Pakistan leaders on the quiet to hold discussion with him regarding the future Constitution. But he did nothing of the kind. He did not go to West Pakistan to assure the public there (and not the leaders) that East Pakistan now being in a position of domination would do nothing but justice and generosity with the people in the other parts. He talked with the West Pakistani leaders and instead of keeping the results to himself until the end of the discussions, he came out in the press repeating his claim for a 6-point based Constitution, as a sort of refrain.

In the midst of the melee, there was ample scope for intelligent people to draw their conclusion and correctly too. Not only was this not done, there were many who joined the chorus on either side to make confusion worse confounded. The only person who tried to keep the objectives and facts coherent and straight was Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. He met Mujib and tried to persuade him to bring about some amount of flexibility in his stand. When he failed, he reported to his electorate in West Pakistan. He pointed out how a Constitution on Six Points would destroy the integrity of the country, he stated that if he went to the Assembly without an agreement outside, he might he brushed aside as a minority, and a detrimental

and suicidal Constitution imposed on the nation. His arguments were drowned in the noise, only his assertions were picked out of contest, and flaunted before the world not only by Mujib but some of the discredited West Pakistani leaders too.

In February, East Pakistan's postal services also went on strike. Communication was thoroughly disrupted not only between the wings but within the province also. Simultaneously goondas took the field, terrorizing people with individual views off the streets and public places. The *Mukti Bahani* spread its activities everywhere, enrolling "volunteers", spreading propaganda rumours of every type to increase the chaos so that no one should be in a position to see the wood for the trees, deploying hands to whip up the countryside to hysteria.

There is ample evidence which can be recapitulated to prove that the majority of these were Indian infiltrators, who were taking the lead, and a large number of youth from the schools and colleges, who were out for the fun of it. There was hysteria on the one hand and on the other a lack of correct intelligence on the part of Yahya's Government as to what was happening.

Was this a proper atmosphere for negotiations and talks?

Many people speak of a "political solution", without actually knowing what that solution could be. On the basis of Six Points, as Mujib desired, a national constitution would have meant a disintegration of Pakistan, as a whole. Short of it, there could be a solution on the basis of give-and-take; but was

Mujib prepared for it, that is, to budge even an inch from his stand? The third alternative was to ask Mujib to speak only for East Pakistan and to withdraw from Pakistan, leaving the rest of the country intact. As a last step Bhutto had even offered that solution, "We on this side and you on that"! Was it accepted? No, it was not accepted but Bhutto's enemies are today flaunting it before the world to show that Bhutto wanted it "in a bid for power". If they can tear out such points from their context and present to the nation in a twisted form, only to condemn, what they would not have done to Yahya if he had agreed to that "political solution". Naturally he didn't.

What else was there for Yahya to do but to take resort to force. It was his cross and he had to carry it. There was no other way short of signing away the integrity of the country.

The horror and the terror that ensued, again, was neither the doing of Yahya nor of Tikka. Their error was that in their anxiety to arrive at a compromise, they waited too long. On March 7, 1971, Mujib made a speech on the Race Course maidan at Dacca. In that speech he openly declared his rebellion against the established Government not in national interests, but only in his own interests and the interest of the objectives he had adopted. We have given some phrases of his speech at the start of this book. That was the time to take action against Mujib and the Awami League. But Yahya went on prolonging negotiations and in an uncertain atmosphere prevailed.

The result of this procrastination came out in the following ways :

(*a*) Of the loyal Pakistani elements in Pakistan the eastern wing 92 per cent of the Muslims lost their effectiveness and made no effort to stand up to the traitor, as the army was not backing them, the future of the Government remained uncertain and the countryside continued to remain in the hands of the goondas.

(*b*) Government servants dared not but obey the majority party in the future Parliament against a Government which was offering itself to be liquidated in favour of a democratic set-up and therefore, helped in making the parallel Government a success.

(*c*) It wrote the epitaph on the lives and property of the so-called "Biharis", which included, apart from the people from Bihar, others from West Pakistan and migrants from India. Just before the talks finally broke down—which they were bound to, considering the background—they were made to surrender all their arms to the administration and were left with nothing to defend themselves. They went meekly to their slaughter when the time came. Had they received a fair warning, and some help, they could have given a good account of themselves, and the massacres would have been very limited.

We do not say that the Yahya regime is totally to blame for this delay in action. There might

have been cogent reasons for it. But the fact remains that it helped in the bloodshed that ensued

On March 22, 1971, the author, along with some other "Bihari" gentlemen, went to see the Commander of the 24th Baluch Regiment (strength: 360) stationed at Chittagong Cantonment, Lieut Colonel Fatemi. He was quite complacent and sure of himself. He had no idea that the East Bengal Regiment, also within the same Cantonment, 4,700 strong, was going to rebel on the night of the 25th. (Nor did we know, at the time.) Looking back at the comparative figures to-day, it seems really horrifying how imbalanced were the two forces. From March 7 to 25, the Awami Leage and the Indians had ample time to organise themselves. On March 8, a trainload of Indian armed personnel, carrying weapons for the rebels, steamed to a station close to Chittagong without the army or the Pakistan High Command in the province being the wiser. The army had, since March 1, been restricted completely to the barracks.

While the Indian infiltrators and the Awami League were building their forces in every direction for a show down, the insistence of Yahya for further negotiations was a bit out of place. Mujib had burnt his boats on March 7, but it appears that the Bengali sections of the Armed Forces were weaned away after that date. This has also been stated by many of Awami League partisans in write--ups which appeared after the establishment of Bangladesh.

That the Pakistan Army was totally unprepared

for that is apparent from the way the picture unfolded after March 25. Even in Dacca, all the members of the Awami League Parliamentary Party, both Central and Provincial, were allowed to slip through to India, excepting Mujib and, by some peculiar circumstances, Kamal Ahmad. They later on assembled in Calcutta and formed a "Government in exile" which had some legal sanction to it, as one setup by the elected representatives of the people of East Pakistan. All the Forces in the Cantonment at Comilla, Chittagong, Jessore and elsewhere were pinned to their barracks by hundreds of thousands of armed civilians, while inside they had to fight the Bengali members of the Army. All the entries and exits to the Cantonments were blocked by barricades of various types, bridges and culverts smashed, to obstruct the sally of tanks or armoured vehicles. All this was performed within two days, on March 24 and 25 and the Army intelligence knew nothing of it. The East Pakistan Rifles and the Police also revolted, and most of the non-Bengali officers and men were massacred along with their families.

It has been stated that the total number of armed forces in East Pakistan on March 25 was 18,000, out of which 12,000 were Bengalis and only 6,000 West Pakistanis. Most of the West Pakistanis were concentrated in Dacca, leaving those in other Cantonments in a minority and an easy game for their own colleagues. In Chittagong, for example the 24 Baluch Regiment had only 360 persons against 4,700 of the East Bengal Regiment. The Bengali force was

augmented by about 800 of under-training soldiers and about 2,000 in the East Pakistan Rifles outside the Cantonment area. The Cantonment had been surrounded by about 50,000 civilians all armed with rifles and other small weapons.

The importance of Chittagong had not been appreciated at all. That it was a port city and its fall to the rebels would have opened the gates for active assistance from outside never occured to the Pakistan Army strategists. The conclusion is inescapable that the Martial Law regime of General Yahya Khan never suspected that there was going to be an armed rebellion of the proportions actually taking place. They had totally misunderstood and misread the political game which was being played in East Pakistan. In fact, it seems that the sequestered upbringing of the forces militates against their capacities to follow the intricate lines of civilian subversion. Besides, in East Pakistan the intelligence services had been affected much earlier. This was especially because the "Bihari" or Muhajir element was ousted from most of these, although this was the section which was not affected by the position of Bengali nationalism while at the same time acquiring sufficient extent of lingual proficiency to burrow itself into local seciety for national purposes whenever required. But, as a part of an overall picture of growing provincialism, this was the section which was scientifically weeded out and as a result, there was no way for the Central Government to know facts.

One can very well appreciate at this stage how the generation of progressive antipathy against the

Indian migrant in all branches of Government activity, so much so that it permeated even into those operations in which even enemy citizens can be employed if their utility can be adjudged to produce results, produced its own evils. After an early period of about four years when only these people were found to have sufficient patriotic fervour to be used as agents by the civil intelligence services, a suggestion had been mooted by someone or the other that their loyalty to the state could be suspect. As many of them were removed from their posts in East Pakistan as was administratively possible, leaving only the native born who, in fact, were in a doubtful category because of the growing evil of provincialism, a disease condemned by the Quaid-e-Azam most vociferously. Provincialism in East Pakistan was different in its impact to that in West Pakistan. While in the latter, it could flourish more as rivalry between four regions, in the former it brought the Bengali Muslim closer to West Bengal by virtue of language and was, therefore, of a different and more dangerous quality.

As it happened, resistance in Dacca was only for such a period that it allowed the escape of the elected members to India and it hardly justified the keeping of such a large force in the capital as was actully done. The main assault actually came in Chittagong. It was from the Chittagong Radio Station that Major Ziaur Rahman (now Major General and President of Bangladesh) declared the independence of the territory and appealed for the help of the international community. This did not mean much at the moment except setting up a sort of doubtful legality for the

insurgent forces. The situation, from the military point of view, was most dangerous in the port city. It has been pointed out above that the West Pakistani force in this city was hardly around 400, pitted against 4700 trained army personnel in the Cantonment, 800 under training personnel in the Solashahr market, 2,000 trained men of the East Pakistan Rifles in Halishahr, and more than 50,000 gun-toting civilians who surrounded the Cantonment on the night of March 25, the exits of which had been blocked by barricades, burning coal-tar, smashed culverts and bridges.

Fortunately, the jetties were in the hands of the Army, with 100 out of the 400 West Pakistanis having been shifted there on March 23 for the unloading of the m. v. "Swat", a vessel from Karachi carry-weapons. Another factor was that a naval ship, then in port was somehow rid of insurgent elements, and in the hands of the Pakistan Navy and was lying anchored in the river. Accurate shelling from this ship forced the civilian force to seek shelter off the hills on which they lay in watch around the Cantonment, thus isolating the fight within, between the 24 Baluch and the East Bengal Regiment. The fight lasted the whole night of March 25 and out of the 4,700 about six hundred were killed, eight hundred captured and the rest ran away into the city and the hills.

Between March 25 and 29, the city of Chittagong was completely in the hands of the insurgents who, instead of setting up an administration or trying to run it as a captured city, began indulging in an orgy of unmitigated massacre and rape (of Bihari girls) and

waiting for the "Punjabis" to come.

Wireleess communication between Chittagong and Comilla had been disrupted as it was in the hands of the Bengalis when the fireworks began, and the Lieutenant Colonel commanding the 24 Baluch did not know of the whereabouts of a company of 100 which had left Comilla for his relief and was expected to reach on the morning of March 26. This company had been subjected to barriers on the road, attacks and ambushes, and eventually reached Chittagong on March 29.

The insurgents had occupied public and private buildings all over the city and set up regular mor-"chas" to fight with the Army. There was, however, little fighting. As soon as the "Punjabis" arrived, the rebels ran for their life and many were killed while running. The Chittagong Railway Building, defended by a force of about 2,000 strong was assaulted and captured by seven persons riding an army truck. The defenders ran pell-mell as the small force began climbing the hill from the rear, firing from it. Many of them were killed; others hastily rushed to other buildings, got rid of their uniforms and put on lungis. The Police Lines, guarded by 3,000, was captured by five persons of the Pakistan Army in the sameway. There was, however, some fight on the Court hill where the Pak Army lost some of its men.

A word here may be said about the actual force of the rebels. The count given earlier has been about the native East Pakistan forces which had mutinied and joined the rebels—and of the civilians. Those from amongst them who had occupied the city totalled

about 5,500. But the actual number of the insurgents was many times more. There is ample evidence to prove that a large contingent of Indian commandos had joined the insurgents. Apart from a train load of them who had arrived on March 3 from Tripura, many had been air-lifted by helicopters to Rangamti and come down to Chittagong by various routes. They got mixed up with the East Bengalis, but were the first ones to run as they did not want to be captured or their bodies found. This actually created a panic among the rebels and the original intention of using them to boost the morale of the insurgent forces not only misfired but was responsible for their total defeat.

The anxiety of many to save themselves by mixing with the civilian population and being spotted there was responsible for many civilian casualties which was later on made so much capital out of. When a small contingent of the company coming from Comilla reached Halishahr, the soldiers of the East Pakistan Rifles who had so "bravely" massacred the families of the non-Bengali officers on the night of March 25, ran away into the surrounding villages where they were chased by the Pakistan Army personnel. It was on many occasions that soldiers had to hold their fire to save civilians being killed, but in the melee many were.

When the force was on its way from Comilla, it had been fired upon from road-side villages and in the return operation at the points the fire had come from, many civilians were killed. Normally if the rebels intended to make their attacks from these points, they should have cleared the areas in the vicinity of civilians, which they did not do. In fact their sudden arri-

val there had been opposed, as a rule, by the villagers but they were forced at gun-point to keep quiet. They had no idea what was going to happen and it took them completely by surprise when these insurgent soldiers drew fire by attacking the army contingent. The responsibility for all the civilians killed in the operation lay with the insurgents themselves.

Then, wherever the army arrived, they found the signs of killing and rapes against the non-Bengalis, dead bodies of women and innocent children scattered about who had been massacred out of a sadistic love of blood only, and many of the soldiers simply lost their head. It was only with difficulity that they could be restrained by their officers from killing every Bengali in the vicinity. The author of this book, who was in Chittagong at the time, made extensive tours of the areas after the rebellion had been suppressed and found little evidence of indiscriminate killing of civilians. The lies being spread by foreign instruments of propaganda, appeared to the witness so palpably untrue that he lost all confidence in their capacity of objective reporting. The British and American correspondents were actually sitting in Calcutta and sending their despatches from there as fed by the Indian propaganda machine and could hardly have any relation to truth.

The story of Chittagong was being repeated in most parts of East Pakistan. It was not until April 21 that the whole of the province had been cleared of all insurgency. Everywhere the story was the same, the insurgents running away at the first sight of the "Punjabi" and sometimes killing the non-Bengalis as they retreated or doing it earlier, getting into villages

to hide and then insensibly firing in panic on the army and drawing their fire resulting in civilian casualities.

As the insurgent forces withdrew towards India, after perpetrating terrible cruelties on the non-Bengalis, they told the Bengali inhabitants in the area that the Pakistan army would come and wreak vengeance for it, and thus frightening them into running across the borders. Most of those who took refuge across the borders had gone there much before the Pakistan army arrived, out of sheer panic. They included a large number of Hindus who took to their heels because of their religion.

The story of what came after the recapture of East Pakistan from the insurgents and the Indian infiltrators cannot be a part of this work. But, the only comment which may be made is about the so-called "atrocities" of the Pakistan army. Surprisingly enough, a number of people in West Pakistan are either a victim of the foreign propaganda in their regard, or have been so convinced by Indian agents right in their midst, still trying to create bad blood between the masses and their defenders.

So far as killing of the civilians is concerned, the facts have been placed in the above narrative. As for the heinous charge of "rape" those who have lived in East Pakistan would know there was no rhyme or reason for indulging in it. For a sex-starved section, there was ample scope of indulging in their wishes without taking recourse to force. At the same time there is a lot of truth in the story that 40,000 women were sent to East Pakistan from India to "subvert" the armed personnel numbering 70,000 in all. Even the

smallest town of the province had its quota of bad women, as anywhere else where rapidly changing social mores are taking over, and the countryside is overloaded with a fast growing population. Former East Pakistan, with an area one-fifth of the West, had a higher population and density was 3,000 to the square mile against 200 in the West. What Mujib tried to pass on as the results of the army's sins in East Pakistan, were actually the results of Indian "collaboration" with the Awami League. He named the figure of 200,000 of such children, which works out to an average of about three bastards to each member of the Pakistan's army personnel in East Pakistan, in a period of nine months. It would be interesting to know from experts what percentage of rape cases result in impregnation and this assertion would turn to be more astounding, indeed. What is surprising, however, is the ease with which such figures are swallowed hook, line and sinker by a gullible public.

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